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Literatures in Canada/ Littératures au Canada

edited by/sous la direction de
Deborah C. Poff

Association for Canadian Studies
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Introduction: Literatures in Canada

The rich and varied scope of this selection on literature in Canada not only makes for interesting general reading but also recommends itself as a valuable resource text for Canadian students.

The first two articles in this selection illustrate well the differences in opinion and approach to the use of Canadian literature in the service of historical interpretation. MacDonald, who believes that literature can usefully enhance historical interpretation, provides a hypothetical model for such use. The intent of many of MacDonald's suggestions is to rectify the tendencies of historians to use the literary work as direct witness to history. Further, MacDonald warns against the selective use of unique and individual works which support the particular historical hypothesis in question. MacDonald argues for contextualizing literature with background on the authors' lives. She illustrates her methodology with reference to her own historical interpretive work. Fenton, on the other hand, takes a far less sympathetic approach to literature as historical interpretive tool. In his article, "History was nothing remembered, madness was everything remembered," *Antichthon* is used as paradigmatic of the deconstruction "of the oral and written processes traditionally used in documenting or 'inventing' the past." Fenton contends that *Antichthon* polarizes the deconstructionist tendency paradoxically to introduce self-reflexivity into historical reconstruction and thus challenge the "traditional approaches to historical fiction."

A trip through Judith McCombs' survey of twenty years of Atwood criticism is both entertaining and illuminating. McCombs' review often reads like a Canadian weather report where predominantly male critics assess Atwood weather as ranging from cool to ice-jammed. The chronology of the reviews also reminds us of the relative youth of feminist literature in Canada and of how important Atwood's work has been to the North American feminist movement.

The next three related papers discuss the problems of classification for Canadian literature. While MacLaren and Fry argue that the concept of canon is essentially unhelpful to the Canadian literary project, Hjartarson suggests that the radical contingency of value with which we institutionalize culture requires considerably more attention than it has thus far received. As Hjartarson puts this point, "we need a better understanding of the forces at work, of the normative functions of the institutions in which we find ourselves, and of the place from which we as Canadianists, speak."

In "What is a classic? The Case for Canadian Drama," Lister approaches the question of the canon with more equanimity. Lister states that "the Hellenistic period of Canadian drama has begun," and argues that the period for the consolidation and assessment of Canadian drama has arrived. She further believes that we possess flexible criteria for assessing the Canadian classic.

Christopher Armitage's brief tour through his Canadian literature courses at Duke and the University of North Carolina stands alone in this collection as a descriptive piece on what does and does not work with the standard American undergraduate.

In the last article of this selection, "The 'I Am' Experience in *Bonheur d'Occasion*," Drummond develops a Sartrean interpretation of the novel. Specifically, Drummond explores the Sartrean concepts of *mauvaise foi* and the *regard d'autrui* through the characters of Azarius and Emmanuel.

Introduction: Littératures au Canada

De par son contenu riche et varié, le présent recueil peut se concevoir comme une source de lecture générale et intéressante ou encore comme un document utile pour les étudiants canadiens.

Les deux premiers articles de ce recueil illustrent bien les différences d'opinion et d'approche concernant l'utilisation de la littérature à des fins d'interprétation historique. MacDonald qui croit à l'utilité de la littérature dans ce domaine, nous fournit un modèle de travail hypothétique. Derrière ces suggestions se cache l'intention de rectifier la tendance des historiens à utiliser le matériel littéraire comme témoin direct de l'histoire. D'autre part, MacDonald nous met en garde contre l'utilisation sélective de travaux uniques et individuels qui supportent une hypothèse historique particulière. Elle nous propose de contextualiser la littérature en mettant en évidence la vie des différents auteurs. Elle illustre sa méthodologie en référence à son propre travail d'interprétation historique. En revanche, Fenton considère la littérature comme instrument d'interprétation historique de façon beaucoup moins enthousiaste. Dans son article, «History was nothing remembered,

madness was everything remembered», *Antichthon* sert de modèle à la déconstruction des procédés oraux et écrits habituellement utilisés au cours des recherches ou au cours de «l'invention» du passé. Fenton soutient que, paradoxalement, *Antichthon* polarise la tendance déconstructioniste pour introduire l'auto-réflexivité dans la reconstruction historique et remet ainsi en question les approches traditionnelles de la fiction historique.

Par la suite, Judith McComb fait un tour d'horizon des différentes critiques de Margaret Atwood parues au cours des vingt dernières années. Ce survol se lit comme un bulletin de la météo au Canada: des critiques (en majorité masculins) évaluent la température de Atwood selon une échelle allant de tiède à glacé. La chronologie des comptes rendus nous rappellent aussi la jeunesse relative de la littérature féministe au Canada et l'importance de l'oeuvre d'Atwood pour le mouvement féministe nord-américain.

Les trois autres articles traitent des problèmes de classification de la littérature canadienne. Alors que MacLaren et Fry soutiennent que le concept de canon est essentiellement inutile pour le projet littéraire canadien, Hjartarson suggère que la manière incertaine et fortuite avec laquelle nous institutionnalisons la culture requiert considérablement plus d'attention maintenant qu'auparavant. Comme le dit Hjartarson, nous avons besoin d'une meilleure compréhension des forces à l'oeuvre, des fonctions normatives des institutions dans lesquelles nous nous trouvons, et de l'endroit d'où nous, canadianistes, parlons.

Dans «What is a Classic? The Case for Canadian Drama», Lister aborde la question des critères d'évaluations avec plus de sérénité. Elle affirme que «la période hellénique du théâtre canadien a commencé» et aussi que l'époque de la consolidation et de l'affirmation du théâtre canadien est arrivée. Lister croit de plus que nous possédons des critères flexibles pour évaluer les classiques canadiens.

Le bref tour d'horizon que fait Christopher Armitage de ses cours en littérature canadienne à l'Université Duke et à l'Université de Caroline du Nord se démarque dans ce recueil car il s'agit plutôt d'une discussion descriptive sur les oeuvres littéraires qui servent de matériel d'enseignement. Armitage y discute des oeuvres qui intéressent le plus l'étudiant américain au niveau du baccalauréat.

Dans le dernier article de cette sélection, «The "I am" Experience in *Bonheur d'occasion*», Drummond développe une interprétation sartrienne du roman. Plus précisément, Drummond explore les concepts sartriens de «mauvaise foi» et de «regard d'autrui» à travers les personnages d'Azarius et d'Emmanuel.

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Mary Lu MacDonald

Nineteenth-Century Canadian Literature as a Primary Source for the Study of Canadian Social and Intellectual History

Le présent travail cherche à montrer que les méthodes traditionnelles utilisées en histoire et en littérature produisent généralement des études qui n'utilisent pas suffisamment ou adéquatement la littérature canadienne comme source historique importante. Ce travail se propose d'utiliser une méthodologie qui applique les techniques quantitatives de l'histoire sociale à l'analyse des idées contenues dans la banque de données formée par l'ensemble des oeuvres littéraires. Cette méthode conçoit la littérature comme une masse d'idées organisées par l'intelligence humaine à un moment donné et dans un lieu précis, et présuppose que toutes les oeuvres littéraires dans la banque de données ont une valeur égale pour l'analyse historique. La méthodologie proposée a l'avantage d'avoir accès à une banque de données de plus grande envergure et se caractérise par le nombre de questions soulevées, l'étendue des renseignements concernant les écrivains et le medium utilisé, et finalement par l'application d'un certain nombre de modèles analytiques aux données. En guise de conclusion, l'auteur illustre ce cadre théorique par une étude de la littérature publiée au Haut et au Bas Canada entre 1817 et 1850. La recherche montre qu'à ses débuts, la société canadienne s'attendait à ce que ses auteurs produisent une littérature nationale, de bonne moralité, qui montrent que les Canadiens pouvaient faire aussi bien ou même mieux que ce qui était écrit ailleurs. On peut expliquer certains aspects du contenu de la banque de données littéraire à l'aide de modèles économiques, politiques et religieux, mais le meilleur modèle demeure encore celui qui repose sur le lieu de naissance et la langue maternelle de l'écrivain.

In the minds of many of their practitioners the disciplines of literature and history are, and should be, completely separate studies. For these individuals the only characteristic the two disciplines have in common is that each is principally concerned with the interpretation of written material. For most historians, literature is not a fact, as the price of bread in 1789 is a fact. It is a subjectively organized body of words and as such is not capable of empirical, historical analysis. On the other side, the most common attitude of literary scholars to history is that it is irrelevant to their work, which is centered on the text itself. For them, biographical or contextual information about an author is of little interest unless the author has personally made it relevant by directing the reader's attention to it.

Fortunately, such disciplinary particularity is difficult to maintain, especially when the objective is the analysis of either literature or society in a past extending beyond living memory. When literature and history do come together, however, the theoretical interpretations of their interaction also vary according to discipline. Literary criticism is essentially concerned with aesthetic evaluation. Those critics who wish to link literature to a past society attribute to writers, perceived in our time to be "great", a quality of acuteness of observation which allows their literary productions to be considered as "representative" of the ideas of a previous age. For literary critics the link between literature and society is in the creative writer's vision of the two. For most historians, except where biography is concerned, an historical individual's perception of time and place is rarely important. If literature is to be considered as a valid witness to the past, the testimony must come from more than one source and the biases of those sources must be understood. To see creative writers, as historians do, as rooted in, and responding to, a particular social system is to make historical context the link between literature and society.

These theoretical constructs are frequently ignored in practice. Those who teach the literature of other cultures usually provide students with some context for the works on the course. Only when dealing with our own culture do we omit this step — using the literary works themselves as a sort of direct witness. Anyone who has tried to teach the social and intellectual history of pre-Confederation Canada to undergraduates also enrolled in a survey course in Canadian literature has had to deal with the works of Susanna Moodie, John Richardson, Thomas McCulloch and Aubert de Gaspé *père*. The historian states in vain that these authors' views of the world they lived in are unique, because the students have already been told, or have grasped the idea in some way, that these writers' attitudes were "typical". Like most stereotypes, the literary view of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Canada based on the works of a few selected authors have a chicken and egg relationship: they conform to a perceived reality for which they themselves are the source.

Another problem in the "cross-over" between literature and history is what may be called "the Whig interpretation of literature." In the study of history, the Whig interpretation is the one which sees the past as a smooth progressive continuum leading to the present. Any aspect of the past which cannot be interpreted as foreshadowing the historian's perception of the present is eliminated as irrelevant detail. In literary criticism this Whig interpretation has resulted in the excesses of thematic criticism — choosing an aspect of contemporary literature and tracing it backward in time through a highly selective reading of early Canadian literature in order to "prove" that such and such an idea or characteristic was equally dominant in our early intellectual history. It has also resulted in the critical dismissal of some early works because they do not conform to the critic's view of our history. Two examples of this latter tendency are: first, rejecting the "Indian as ally" theme in early writing because, to one whose sensibility is shaped by modern relations between Indians and Whites, the idea seems incredible. This despite the historical evidence that Indians were important allies in the first centuries of Western European settlement and that gratitude for this assistance was part of the socio-political rhetoric of pre-Confederation Canada. A second example: ignoring Michel Bibaud's contribution to early French-Canadian literature because he is perceived by modern critics whose knowledge of history is shaky, but whose sense of ideology is secure, as a Tory classicist, and a bad writer who was somehow not truly French-Canadian. That he was, in fact, not a Tory, not a classicist, not a bad writer, and an intense French-Canadian nationalist of a variety not currently in fashion, are all details which have been ignored.

Lest it seem that I find all the cross-over sins on the literature side, I should point out that historians are particularly prone to the selective quoting of literary sources in order to buttress theories about the past. However out of context the quotation may be, however atypical its writer, the citation is acceptable if it adds lustre to the argument, if it "proves" that people living in the past perceived reality in the same way as the modern historian, and if, incidentally, it indicates that the historian is a person of broad cultural background.

The great Canadian humanities scholar George Whalley has written, in a paper entitled "'Scholarship', 'Research' and 'The Pursuit of Truth'," "Beware of the method-oriented problem: seek out the problem-oriented method."[1] Certainly, there are many problems associated with the use of literature as historical evidence which cannot be resolved by the use of traditional methods. Approaching literary primary sources solely in the generally-accepted manner of either historical or literary scholarship produces limited results. Historians tend to focus on the exposition of a pre-determined thesis, omitting contrary information on the assumption that such information will either be overlooked or be introduced by someone else in the context of an antithesis, which ultimately leads on to synthesis. Literature as a primary source is too diverse for such narrow treatment,

because almost any thesis can be "proved" by a careful selection of literary references. On the other hand, literary scholars tend to concentrate on the development of themes or genres, on the development of a creative writer's body of work, or on the cosmic implications of one particular work. They are concerned with the writer and/or the work, not with the society in which and for which the work was produced. If we define the problem as the need to enlarge our understanding of both literature and history, then neither of these methods is applicable. A method must be devised which is appropriate to the problem.

For the historian, the problem of producing what might be called a social history of ideas is intradisciplinary as well as interdisciplinary. Although social and intellectual history are frequently grouped together because they deal more with people than with the state, they are quite separate pursuits. Social historians are not much concerned with ideas, focusing most often on the daily lives of the non-elite deduced from as broad a base as possible. Intellectual historians are not much concerned with daily lives, focusing instead on the nature of the ideas circulating in a particular society. When they look at literary sources they tend to concentrate on the ideas of one writer, or of an elite group of intellectual leaders, which are then interpreted in the context of time and place. There is a tendency for the interpretation to take precedence over the text. What I have tried to do is apply quantitative social history methods to the analysis of an intellectual history data base. I offer the resulting methodology as a hypothetical model for others to test. The model is intended for the use of those working from literature as a source to both social and intellectual history as a result, but you will note that it can be applied as well to the contextual elucidation of literary works. Basic to the model is, first, a conception of literature as a mass of ideas organized by human intelligence; and secondly, a requirement that, as reader, the researcher must leave behind literary value judgments when approaching these ideas.

Before outlining the method I have developed, I should make it clear that the analysis of authors of a particular time and place as a group, and of their works as one composite body of historical evidence, takes nothing away from these same authors as the creators of particular, individual, works which are appropriate subjects for literary analysis. We are each of us immersed from birth in a time and place and culture. These factors influence, but do not determine, our development. People born into the same socio-economic class on the same day in the same community do not turn out to be any more alike than do all Capricorns. To know the forces which shaped a Shakespeare does not mean that, if those forces could be exactly reproduced, another Shakespeare would appear. The integral quality of individual creativity remains fundamental.

After such a lengthy introduction it seems anti-climactic to say that researchers should approach the problem of literature as social and intellectual history by assembling, classifying, analyzing, and evaluating

their material. However, it is the manner in which each of these steps is undertaken which is important.

First, if one is to make historical sense of the diversity of individual creative expression, as broad a literary base as possible must be assembled: not just the works of one authorial genius, but the works of many, from as broad a social spectrum as possible. The works must be published or intended for publication.

Diaries, however pertinent they may be to the analysis which comes later, cannot be considered as part of the literary base because the intention to communicate something to the society in which the writer lives is all-important. In the case of the nineteenth century, basic bibliographic research must be directed to literature published in local newspapers and short-lived periodicals as well as to that published in the *Literary Garland*. One must start with the assumption — which perhaps comes easier to the historian than to the literary scholar — that all the works in the literary data base are of equal value. Whether they were written by "Studius" or "Emilia" or Milton is not important because we are concerned with the ideas they encompass, not with the excellence of manner in which the ideas are presented. Those whom we now perceive to be mediocre writers may, in fact, reflect social attitudes more accurately than the person of genius. Frequently their works are more popular and influential in their own time than the works of genius. As equal citizens in a particular society all writers have equal right to be heard.

Next the researcher must decide what it is that he or she wants to know about the society in which and for which the literature was written. It is important to recognize our own cultural biases and avoid predetermining the result by asking too narrow a range of questions, or too present-oriented questions, of the material. Breadth of questions is as important as breadth of data base. Each literary item is then read, both for text and sub-text, in the light of these questions.

When the data has been assembled and classified, it must next be analyzed. For this purpose as much information as possible about the individual writer and the medium of publication is necessary. Where was the creative writer educated? What was his or her religion? In what way did they make their living? Where were they born and when? What was their family background? What were their political views? Where the medium is concerned: who was the editor, what was his or her background, and how was the publication financed? Were the contributors to a particular publication all resident in the region in which it was published? Did they share a particular political or religious perspective? One must also attempt to find out who the prospective readers were, what were their expectations of the literary material, and what force these expectations had for individual writers. If one wants to approach a society through its literature then social standards, both met and unmet, literary and non-literary, must be considered.

The economic and political conditions which affect literary production must be sought out.

Having asked all the analytic questions that can be answered empirically, one can then evaluate the ideas and attitudes expressed in the literature. Again, as in all the preceding steps, the widest possible range of explanatory models must be considered in relation to all questions. In this manner trends can be identified and the researcher can say with reasonable authority that literate society in a specific time and place accepted such and such an idea, or that a particular writer's testimony can be accepted on a particular subject.

For social and intellectual historians this research method opens up the possibility of new primary sources and the resulting expansion of our knowledge of the past. For literary scholars it offers the possibility of understanding an author's works in the context in which they were written and of understanding more precisely a literary time and place.

There are, of course, limitations. The principal one is that background is difficult to determine for many writers. They did not all write their autobiography, keep a diary, leave papers which have been preserved, or lead a public career. Many used pseudonyms which protect their anonymity forever. Where the nineteenth century is concerned, the difficulty of locating source material is another problem. As well, we must accept the fact that there will always be some questions which cannot be answered by some types of material. There are human limitations. Where literary scholarship is concerned, no amount of contextual explication will influence someone who believes that it is wrong to try to understand the past in the past's terms, and who consequently thinks that the standards prescribed by modern society are the only criteria which can legitimately be employed. Similarly, an historian who cannot, or will not, be sensitive to ideas presented in sub-text as well as text, will not find the methodology productive.

Having established a theoretical framework, I would like to illustrate it by reference to my own research in Canadian literature and social and intellectual history in the period before 1850. First, by "Canada" I mean "the Canadas" of the pre-Confederation period. This does not include what we now call "the Maritimes". The data base for the study was all surviving books, periodicals and newspapers published, in English and French, in Upper and Lower Canada between 1817 and 1850. This was supplemented for purposes of contextual analysis by a wide range of archival material. The definition I used of "Canadian literature" was that the works had to be published in Canada or, if published elsewhere, intended for Canadian readers.

The content of the literary work was analyzed under twenty-six headings, all related either to the attitudes of the residents of the two colonies towards daily life in the Canadas, or to more general questions of the Canadas' purpose and place in the world and the national feelings of the

residents. These headings varied from very general ones such as "progress" and "education" to very specific ones such as "rebellions" and "gender roles".

The contextual analysis took into account three principal factors: the conditions and costs of writing and publishing; biographical data on authors, who were then analyzed as a group according to religion, politics, occupation and age; and societal expectations of literature as expressed in manifestoes, prefaces, critical comment, and other forms of published discourse.

From the contextual analysis it emerged that the literary works of the period were a valid subject for historical research. With the exception of John Richardson, all the writers were amateurs who made their living through some occupation other than writing. All but Richardson were fully integrated members of the society in which and for which they wrote. They were followers, rather than visionary intellectual leaders. They were thus as valid a group for study as any other part of the community and had the advantage of being a different type of group than those customarily studied.

From the social context we can learn much which illuminates the literature. The link between them is strongest and most noticeable in the moral sphere. Poems routinely ended with a final stanza praising the Creator and Father who had provided the tree or stream or loved one contemplated by the poet, or who consoled the poet at times of sorrow. All fiction ended with the good rewarded, the bad punished, and the moral carefully explained just in case the reader had missed it. Our early writers reflected the values of a strongly Christian, conservative society. Even the few who expressed some impatience with the materialism or hypocrisy of others did so by casting themselves in the role of guardians of a more perfect morality.

Next to morality, the most important criterion early Canadian society applied to its literature was that it take its place among the national literatures of the world, not as a separate entity with its own rules and standards, but as one which did as well, or better, the things which were being done elsewhere. It was also expected to present a positive image of Canada. This conception of a national literature, not as something unique to Canada, having its own subject matter and genres, but as a body of locally written words the existence of which automatically conferred national status, does not mean that early nineteenth-century Canadians were "colonial" in the sense that we now mean the word as equivalent to "derivative" or "dependent". It merely means that they accepted the definition of a national literature current in their own day. The idea of "nationality" in anything approaching a modern sense did not develop until the late eighteenth century. Allied to it was the perception that the existence of a national literature was one of the criteria for the existence of a nation itself. In the first half of the nineteenth century these ideas were still vaguely expressed and heavily emotional, rather than clearly defined. Throughout Europe and South America many cultural groups which were not yet nations in the political sense were struggling with the application of ideas of nationality to

their own identities. It should not be surprising then to find pre-Confederation Canadians writing about "nation" — a word they seem to have used interchangeably with "colony" — and about the necessity of producing a national literature. As it happened, the self-appointed literary critics who outlined these expectations in English were all immigrants, and in French were almost all native-born. They agreed that native Canadian writing should be encouraged and that it should inspire pride in those who identified themselves with the nation. However, to the French-Canadian critics, fighting for political, economic and cultural identity, the nation was conceived as a spiritual collectivity rather than as a particular space. For the immigrant English critics, Canada was a place with defined borders in which English culture should be predominant. In both cultures, the cry for a national literature was heard in the land long before it became the nation we know.

No rigid model of economic determinism can be successfully applied to our early literature, but there is ample evidence that economic conditions were an important influence. Cycles of prosperity and depression seem to have determined the pace of publishing in English, with more publications and more Canadian content appearing in prosperous times, although this was not the case in French. The spirit of entrepreneurship which activated the economic life of the colony in this period also carried over into the literary world. Proprietors launched periodicals in the hope of a profit. When they lost money the publication was speedily terminated. With one exception, authors published their books themselves, paying for the printing out of their own pockets or by selling advance subscriptions. Because there was little cash circulating in the Canadas, the cost of a book or newspaper or periodical subscription was important. Some newspapers accepted payment of subscriptions in kind: in wood for the office stoves and in rags for paper-making. At all levels of the literary world writers and publishers complained of the difficulty of collecting money due them. One of the interesting sidelights of investigating the price per page of a large number of publications is that it can be determined that John Richardson was charging about twice the going rate for *The Canadian Brothers* and *The Guards in Canada* — which may do as much to explain his lack of sales as the public philistinism to which Richardson attributed it. Detailed analysis of customs house records reveals that the Canadian public rhetoric which deplored American pirating of British books and periodicals was nothing but rhetoric. In actual practice, almost all British works were imported in cheap editions from the United States. When Westminster imposed import duties on the American imports the outcry from Canadians about "a tax on knowledge" forced the Legislative Assembly to hold hearings into the relative cost of works imported from Britain and the United States. The result was an official protest to the Colonial Office by the Assembly.

Politics also played an important part in the literary world: on a day-to-day basis often determining the relations between author and publisher and

reviewer; and at the level of ideas frequently providing a motivation for writing. Religion followed the same pattern.

When we look at all the literature printed in the Canadas and available to Canadian readers it rapidly becomes apparent that the dominant extra-territorial influence came from Great Britain and France, rather than from the United States, although the percentage of American content increased in most areas of daily cross-border contact. These influences were politically neutral, in the sense that "reform" ideas did not have an American "republican" source and that "Tory" ideas did not come exclusively from England. In fact, Canadian reformers were more likely to refer to British Whig-oriented literature than they were to American models. Religious periodicals of the Congregational, Baptist, and Methodist denominations did, however, borrow most of their literary material from the United States, while periodicals sponsored by the Churches of England and Scotland borrowed more from British publications.

When we examine the social profile of our writers we find that they were predominantly educated, urban, and middle class. The content of their work reflects this background. They were, as I have mentioned, all amateurs who made their living in some occupation other than writing. Native-born writers tended to be young men not yet economically established; the immigrants were generally older and seemed to regard creative writing as a leisure occupation for ladies and gentlemen. When these individuals wrote about what we call "class" or "status" they depicted a middle-class world in which there was no resident aristocracy or upper-class, although there certainly were servants and both deserving and undeserving poor. Farmers were generally portrayed as uncouth rustics who spoke in heavy dialects. All writers agreed that status was conferred by personal merit, not material worth, but definitions of what constituted merit, and lack of merit, varied considerably. They all agreed also that it was the role of the male to be active and decisive, and of the female to be passive and dependent, but the value assigned to these roles varied according to whether the writer was male or female.

The general unanimity of Canadian writers in both languages about matters of morality did not carry over into other areas. Although economic interest and religious and political beliefs explained a number of elements in the socio-literary context, none of these models explained the variations in attitudes of early Canadian writers to a whole range of perceptions of Canadian life. The one model which did consistently make sense of these differences was one based on place of birth and mother tongue. This model yields up four categories: native-born English, native-born French, immigrant English, and immigrant French.

In most cases, as one would expect, the attitudes of immigrant English and of native French are at opposite ends of the spectrum. The native-born English, linked to one group by a common language and to the other by a

common country of birth, most often resembled the latter, and sometimes showed attitudes unique to themselves.

Both native-born groups displayed little colonial defensiveness in their attitudes to their linguistic mother countries. Canada was the centre of their world and they saw no reason to apologize for this fact. The literary imaginations of the native-born males, like their loyalties, were focused on the Canadas. Although they generally made use of internationally accepted descriptive terminology, the English-speaking were nonetheless looking clearly and directly at both Canadian society and the Canadian landscape. For French-Canadian writers, Canada was more a nation of the spirit than a specific place to be described in careful detail. They were aware of nature, and took pleasure in what they saw, but their nature poetry was conventional and romantic, full of classical allusions. Their descriptions of Canada's people and of contemporary Canadian politics were, by contrast, shrewdly observant. The past of which they wrote was the past of living memory. The writing about New France, which we tend to associate with nineteenth-century French-Canadian literature, came in a later period. There are only three instances of prose works set in New France being published before 1850. For French-Canadian writers, history was not an abstract concept, but a utilitarian tradition in which "Chateauguay" and "les exilés politiques" were slogans with implications understood by all. As part of a spiritual nation they showed a strong sense of collective identity, defining themselves as *Canadiens* in opposition to their English conquerors.

The native-born English saw themselves only as Canadians, but they were not always sure what that meant. Their use of history seems almost random. They searched in their past and found heroes and triumphant slogans in the War of 1812, although not among the loyalists, and they borrowed the romantic antiquity of New France from their compatriots. Contentious contemporary issues were avoided in their writing, although not in their private lives. They were not aggressively British, and they were not aggressively North American. Neither were they anti-British, nor anti-American. Having developed no self-defining myths, and having little in the way of shared national experience, it is not surprising that others ultimately began to tell them who they were. Although they had difficulty in defining themselves as a people, they had no such problems in defining their native land. It is a specific place with definite borders, a united Canada spread along the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes system. Their deep love of country is evident in the many sensitive, specific descriptions of their surroundings they have left for us.

Although many immigrants were ambivalent about the world they had left behind, they nonetheless succumbed to the normal human emotion of nostalgia. However, their nostalgia was spatial, rather than temporal, in that the scenes of childhood were related to a place, rather than a time. They retained their original cultural ties and their feelings of patriotism toward their mother countries, incorporating these into their attitudes toward the

country in which they lived. Most defined themselves as English, Irish, or Scots, rather than as Canadians. Canada was not the frontier of something new, it was the backwoods fringe of the European world in which their imaginations were centered. They called themselves "emigrants", rather than "immigrants", emphasizing their departure from one land, rather than their arrival in another. Nonetheless, only a few looked negatively on Canada and their life here. Their literary response to their new homeland generally took the form of either a detailed description of certain places or activities, or of stories in which the happy ending was projected into time to come. They showed little interest in a Canadian past in which they had not participated, but they wrote with intensity of current politics and of philosophical options for the future, and they were loud in their literary expression of loyalty to Britain in the rebellion period, a time when at least some of the native-born were perceived to be disloyal.

The original inhabitants of the Canadas, the aborigines, appear frequently in Canadian literature of this time, particularly in works by the native-born. Generally they are placed by these authors in the context of times past and are portrayed as real people who were allies and enemies, teachers and murderers, Christians and pagans, romantic heroines, heroes and villains. When they appear in a context of present time it is as shadowy figures lamenting a lost homeland. The immigrant English did not write as much about the aborigines as did the native-born, and, not having much interest in Canada's past, what they wrote was more often in the context of present time. Here the Indians are seen as drunken savages who must be civilized by Christian charity, or as a sad and homeless people. They are rarely portrayed as individuals.

Can early nineteenth-century Canadian literature be used as a source for Canadian social and intellectual history, and can Canadian history increase our understanding of early literature? I think so. A number of potentially fruitful topics for further historical research emerge from my study. Among these are: the community's insistence on the necessity of a national literature; the many differences between the attitudes of immigrants and those of the native-born; and the many similarities in attitudes of French and English native-born. Evidence that a unique indigenous sensibility may have existed a century and a half ago should surely be of interest to modern nationalists.

The historical study of literature helps us to understand that literature. In the context of literary criticism it teaches us to recognize literary merit even when it is interpreted by a sensibility and in a vocabulary which we have been conditioned to dismiss. To know when a writer's vision is unique and when it derives from the community; to understand the literary objectives and critical values which influenced each author; to illuminate political and religious references and connections; to know whether self-proclaimed "spokesmen" of long ago were speaking for the community or only for themselves; these and other aspects of the social context help us to

interpret a literary work. Literature and history interpret society. They are connected in the past as well as today.

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Notes

1. George Whalley, *Studies in Literature and the Humanities* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985) 77.

William Fenton

"History was nothing remembered, madness was everything remembered." *Antichthon* as Canadian Historiographic Fiction.

*Dans l'*Antichthon *Chris Scott reconstitue les dernières années de la vie de Giordano Bruno à travers une série de témoignages écrits et oraux sur sa réclusion et sur son procès. Chris Scott s'engage dans les mêmes dialectiques d'un certain nombre d'écrivains canadiens contemporains qui ont commencé à mettre en doute les idées, les méthodes, les taxonomies et les perspectives idéologiques qui ont été traditionnellement appliquées afin de documenter ou «inventer» le passé historique. La caractéristique de ces écrivains est que le procédé de reconstitution historique est thématisé dans les textes avec les autres composantes qui sont en train de se développer, de façon qu'une composante d'auto-réflexivité est introduite et les approches traditionnelles à la fiction historique sont mis en doute. Chris Scott polarise cette tendance en développant les dernières années de la vie de Giordano Bruno sous l'Inquisition, et le titre* Antichthon *souligne l'existence d'un «autre» monde opposé au monde établi: en explorant les idéaux et les vicissitudes de la vie de Giordano Bruno, l'*Antichthon *révèle la défaite de l'hérétique et de sa vision du monde par les structures du pouvoir de l'ancien monde.*

Canada's relatively short period of history has led to a reconstruction of its past through various forms of documents such as sea-journals, letters biographies, diaries, and, in fiction, through realistic accounts of important historical events. Now that this body of knowledge has been produced, and it is an allegedly faithful rendering of the past, fiction writers have begun to

question the very concepts, methods, taxonomies, and ideological perspectives traditionally applied in putting together a "Canadian History."

A wide variety of Canadian authors like Howard O'Hagan, Robert Kroetsch, Jack Hodgins, George Bowering, Timothy Findley and Chris Scott are engaged in a deconstruction of the oral and written processes traditionally used in documenting or "inventing" the past. What characterizes these writers is that the process of historical reconstruction is thematized into the texts together with the other issues being developed so that a component of self-reflexivity is introduced and traditional approaches to historical fiction are put into question.[1] *Antichton* polarizes this tendency by developing the last years of Giordano Bruno's life in the hands of the Inquisition through a reconstruction of his trial and numerous related testimonials. The title *Antichthon* points to the existence of an "other" world in opposition to the established world: by exploring the ideals and vicissitudes of Giordano Bruno's life, *Antichthon* reveals the defeat of the heretic and of his new world view by the power structures of the old world. Heresy implies a particular relation with the law of the Church, it sets itself up in opposition to the latter's prescribed teachings which become, in time, dogmatic. Thus heresy and dogma are dialectically related, and the predominance of one over the other depends on the amount of repression being enforced during a particular historical period.[2] The epigraph to the first chapter, a quotation from Jesus of Nazareth, sets up an opposition between the original voice of Christianity and the new voice of heresy, between the world of faith and religion and the world of reason and science, between Thon and Antichthon.

The opposition between heresy and dogma is an opposition between the two languages of official and unofficial cultures. In *Antichthon* through these two languages speak a multiplicity of voices, ranging from Giordano Bruno to the Pope, a possessed witch, the historian narrator Kaspar Schopp, Church officials and historical figures. Bakhtin has defined the many-voicedness of novelistic discourse as heteroglossia and the implications of his theories for historiography are particularly revealing in this context: the past can no longer be reconstructed through the documentation of a single voice, or through the monologue of authority, since heteroglossia

> ... is that which insures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions — social, historical, meteorological, physiological — that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions ...[3]

Antichthon reveals how behind Giordano Bruno's execution lie a different number of motivations, Bakhtin's set of conditions, which may have very little to do with the historical one that he was a heretic. Through

two important formal strategies, the polyphonic structure and the *mise en abîme* narrative initiated half way through the text, Scott introduces the element of undecidability into the traditional vision of history as a faithful mirror into the past. *Antichthon*'s polyphony consists of a wide collection of different points of view on Giordano Bruno's life that gradually build up a sense of ambiguity and disorientation in the reader vis-à-vis the truth being spoken by each voice. Oral and written evidence as well as reliable and unreliable testimonials become essential components in the process of historical reconstruction which is foregrounded and laid bare. The concept of the verifiable authenticity of textual origin is thus undermined so that the dividing line between history and fiction vanishes. *Antichthon* can thus be read as a paradigm for numerous other Canadian historiographic novels and proves to be a seminal text in the postmodern concern for self-questioning, self-reflectivity, paradox and doubt.[4] In *Antichthon* heteroglossia speaks on two different levels, through the double nature of language itself, its literal and figurative dimensions, and through the novel's twelve chapters, which are either letters, dialogues between two or more characters, or, as in Pope Clement's chapter, interior monologues. One of the basic concerns in *Antichthon* is to reveal how the heteroglot nature of language leads to a struggle for the assertion of one way of speaking and reading language over another. This is particularly evident in the scenes where Giordano Bruno is interrogated by the Inquisitor, the Apostolic Nuncio, and the Patriarch. During one of these sessions Lorenzo Priuli chooses Giordano Bruno's *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast* to charge him with heresy, thinking that the word Beast refers to the Pope, whilst Giordano replies that he meant ignorance, "I was speaking figuratively and did not mean to be taken literally ..."[5] The Apostolic Nuncio concedes that Giordano's style is obviously "the language of allegory" (*A*, 36), Giordano is a philosopher and so he uses a figurative language "to represent that duality of truth according to which philosophy and theology, science and faith, may co-exist."

Antichthon's twelve chapters denote the completion of the natural cycle of a year, and, by implication, of a lifespan, and establish the novel's circular structure. Circularity is confirmed through the spatial and temporal correspondence between the first and last chapters, they are both set in Rome, February 1600. The beginning and end of *Antichthon* are also linked by Giordano Bruno's imaginary preview of his execution in the opening pages of the text and by the two ocular testimonials to his burning at the stake at the end. Circularity thus functions on a structural level, and on a thematic one through Giordano Bruno's belief in "the reality of the endless cycles, the unceasing flow and rhythm of life." (*A*, 212)

Giordano Bruno's account of his execution is based on his imagination and emphasizes the theatrical element of spectacle and carnivalization in the collective ritual of the execution to underline the *mise en scène*, or artificiality, behind his death:

> What democracy there is in death; what a riotous concurrence inaugurating this carnival of ashes....
>
> So many times have I visited the still uncreated scene that I can hardly believe this future, this death, is my own; another's maybe: *yours* my friend, you who force me to stand outside of myself....
>
> I have acquired other names, other characters. *You, my distant yet close auditor*, will know me as Giordano." (*A*, 10-11)[6]

Giordano defines his death as a "carnival of ashes" since it has been turned into a farcical event where intellectual beliefs are sacrificed to the interests of theological hegemony and folk entertainment. Furthermore Giordano's death spells the defeat of a life commitment to reason by those very people whom he has tried to win over to his way of thinking, "I spoke for truth and science against ignorance and superstition" (*A*, 12). In the above quotation Giordano invites the reader to participate directly with him in the reconstruction of his persona by looking at his other names and characters, his other mirror reflections all indissolubly linked in the historical figure of the Nolan. By addressing the reader as an auditor Giordano implies that what he is saying has not been written by him but dictated to someone else, he thus introduces a gap of unreliability between text and reader, between what Giordano may have really said and what was written down by the clerk who could have partially or completely distorted his language.

The second section of the first chapter opens with an epigraph from a fragment of a written document, a letter signed by Kaspar Schopp, who confirms Giordano's interpretation of his death as a carnivalistic event:

> Yesterday, a Sunday, they made a rogus, a pyre, as they used to in Florence at Carnival time. Bruno, the condemned man himself, was brought into the square and made to stand while the sentence was read. (*A*, 18)

Bakhtin's concept of carnivalization is particularly relevant to *Antichthon* and all other historiographic texts where a reading of the past as a sacred scripture, complete and untouchable, is questioned through the introduction of the fictive component:

> As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order.... *It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed.*[7]

The crowd transforms Giordano's execution from what should be a serious ceremony into a feast of carnival, a folk entertainment, to suspend the real significance of his death, the imposition of religious authority over unorthodox thinking.

The importance of Carnival in *Antichthon* is confirmed by two further references, the first one is made exactly half way through the novel in Chapter VI when the *mise en abîme* narrative of the unfortunate lovers is introduced. It is Corpus Christi day in Rome, June 1600, and Kaspar Schopp is sitting with a Captain who tells him his tale about Portia, his Perugian wife, and Roberto, her lover. Admiring the float of the Last Supper Kaspar notes

> ... something very wrong with the order of the procession, and quite probably the actors were drunk. ... The Last Supper was preceded at a galloping pace by Death Triumphant ... and the Disciples themselves were followed by the nymph Amalthaea, she astride a gigantic cornucopia that showered the people with fountains of red and white wine....
>
> It occurred to Kaspar that such anomalies were not only scandalous but were possibly deliberate.... The mixture of the sacred and the profane, he decided, lowered the whole tone of the festival. (*A*, 133)

This reference to Carnival emphasizes the opposition between official and unofficial languages, between heresy and dogma coming into conflict. The religious profanity of the carnival procession points to the crowd's reaction against the severity and oppression of the Inquisition, it is an instance of the people speaking one of the unofficial pagan languages of religion, the other one being Giordano's heretical rhetoric.

Carnival is again mentioned when Kaspar informs the Cardinal (*A*, 186-7) of his suspicions that a deal was made between the Spaniards, who surrendered the Perugian lovers, and the Italian authorities who agreed to burn Bruno in exchange. Kaspar, the historian, has no evidence to back up his suspicions, but only circumstantial reasoning, "The absence of proof, I make so forward, proves my case." (*A*, 191) The *mise en abîme* narrative reveals that the circumstances leading up to the Perugini's death are parallel to those which led up to Giordano's death, and so Kaspar reaches the conclusion that "The plot in essence, that's the thing. The substance, *concedo*, is still lacking some." (*A*, 189)[8] And in *Antichthon* it is the polyphonic structure and the carnivalization of the past that are the focus of the author's historiographic reconstruction where the emphasis shifts from content, or substance, to process and plot.

The reader has, as yet, no indication that what Kaspar suspects is true, even though the narrator sees himself as a historian who is detached from

the events of Giordano Bruno's life, as "a faithful witness to God's truth, the end of a miserable sinner." (*A*, 18) But as Schopp gets more and more involved in his researches on Giordano Bruno he begins to mix verifiable fact with fantasy, so that his role of historian as a faithful chronicler of events is laid suspect. One of the factually unreliable but highly influential processes called into play by Kaspar Schopp is that of orality, what is said about an event, even if not true, could in time become accepted as a source of historical documentation. Soon after Giordano's execution Kaspar meets a friar who asks him whether it is true that Giordano still lives:

> They say the Pope spirited him away and burned another in his place.... the Cardinal says that Bruno was burned but that his holiness wished to create the contrary impression. (*A*, 19)

The Pope's wish is materialized and turned into history by his followers who "set all Rome buzzing with the rumour that another was burned in place of him" (*A*, 190), so that the false version comes to be believed even by those people who are aware of its doubtful veracity. But Kaspar, pursuing his own vision of history, decides to turn the Vatican's tactics against it by plotting to disclose the "truth" through the oral process:

> A word of this, a hint so much as dropped in the right ear will set all Rome ablaze, and with a greater fire than any heretic ever suffered. One word, and *chiacchiera*. Their own tactics are turned against them. The truth will out. (*A*, 191)[9]

Kaspar's account of events is soon contradicted by the Cardinal when he illustrates his "discoveries" to him, and the effect is one of total reader disorientation vis-à-vis whose is the true version of history. In this section Kaspar is seen in an ironic light, so that a further distance is created between his interpretation and eventual reader credibility. When Kaspar enters the Cardinal's room the latter has his back turned to him as if he "had slighted not only him but history as well." (*A*, 194) Kaspar feels "imbued with the *zeitgeist* of ages past, ages yet to come" (*A*, 194) and the Cardinal seems unaware that "history personified had entered the room." (*A*, 194) Apart from the ridicule thrown on Kaspar by the ironic use of language, the reader is also presented with the Cardinal's point of view on Kaspar's theories:

> ... he forced himself to read Kaspar's letter again. Really, the thing was quite hysterical, though its meaning was clear enough....
>
> Yet the Cardinal felt responsible for this young scholar, who was showing unmistakable symptoms of frenzy. (*A*, 196)

At this point in the narrative Kaspar would seem to be the madman pursuing a visionary interpretation of reality, and as soon as the Cardinal burns Kaspar's letters the latter puts himself above God:

> God was mentally incompetent. Otherwise He would not have allowed the Cardinal to intercept his letters. It was God who was not listening; and it was God and the rest of creation that was mad....
>
> The present, the present was being used up! History was nothing remembered; madness was everything remembered. His mind, his mind was losing its grip!
>
> ... With the simplicity of one who has found the truth, he knew that he was insane. (*A*, 203-5)

The irony of this situation is disclosed in the next chapter, entirely taken up by Pope Clement's interior monologue. The Pope looks back to the past to inquire into the nature of heresy and cites examples from a chronicle of old popes, discovering that "history affords many an inglorious example of a Pope who has ruled infallibly only to have his ruling overthrown in a generation or less." (*A*, 208) Thus the Pope himself, using historical precedents, questions the very concept of heresy and points to other reasons that lie behind Giordano Bruno's execution. The most important one is of a political nature and confirms Kaspar Schopp's theories, so that his previous madness now becomes, for the reader, the light of reason, whilst History is equal to the product of a wild imagination:

> I am Pope and must defend the freedom of the will. What freedom? Spain presses me hard ... Roberto and Portia are fugitives from our laws. Spain has them hostage, our subjects. We have Giordano, and he is Spain's — a Neapolitan by birth.... It was a fault of Giordano's to anger Spain. Because of that, these two lovers must hang. (*A*, 221-2)

Furthermore the Pope reveals his intention that "... the Cardinal shall not learn of this" (*A*, 222), so that the historical truth behind Giordano Bruno's death, unknown to all but the Pope, becomes once again in the public domain the figment of Kaspar Schopp's hallucinatory imagination.

Antichthon's polyphonic structure is amplified in the next chapter by the shift to two interior monologues, Roberto and Portia's respectively, which conclude the sub-text narrative. Their thoughts, oscillating between past and present, reconstruct the unfortunate story of their lives, and in the text the italic print denotes what was said in the past so that the two time sequences are dialogically interrelated and culminate in the hanging of the

lovers. They die because the man who committed murder whilst guarding for them was a nobleman, just as Giordano dies because they are Spain's captives. The two executions thus double one another since they are brought about for a reason which is other than their official reason. The sub-text becomes a *mise en abîme* of the power structures and machinations of the civil and religious judicial systems operating in the main text, and ultimately of how an official version of an event, even when it does not correspond to the truth, is turned into historical knowledge. The *mise en abîme* narrative is related to the main text through the light it throws on historical process and the working of power structures, as Mieke Bal argues "What is put into the perspective of infinite regress is not the totality of an image, but only a part of the text, or a *certain aspect*."[10] So when Portia utters the sentence "Life's a dream of death, a dream within a dream" (*A*, 240) she foregrounds the concept of infinite regress in the text and reveals that the possible levels of reading a historical event are multiple.

Portia's image of life as a dream echoes Pope Clement's conclusion towards the end of his monologue:

> The truth is evanescent, the guttering of a candle flame before shadow and act are forever eclipsed.... The universe is a dream, and the sun of our imagined heaven could just as well be a pastel wafer painted on a paper sky. Who then is the Pope; who the heretic? (*A*, 224)

The fictive universe momentarily envisaged by Pope Clement introduces the element of doubt into his doctrinal beliefs and questions the possibility of ever understanding the truth of life and of the universe. The Pope's conclusion corresponds to Giordano's conclusion about his own life, which, in the context of what the text and the sub-text have revealed, is, paradoxically, the most accurate one as far as historical truth is concerned: "My death, like any other, is a fiction: the only way to keep on living." (*A*, 17) Life and death become a fiction and fiction is turned into reality by a text where the boundary line between historical truth and imaginative invention is fragmented into a multiplicity of voices characterized by doubt, contradiction and paradox.

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Notes

1. For a discussion of these issues in relation to contemporary Canadian writing and for the first definition of the term "historiographic metafiction," see Linda Hutcheon's article "Canadian Historiographic Metafiction," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 30 (Winter 1984/85) 228-38.

2. For Michael Beehler it is almost impossible to draw a dividing line between the two terms. In his article "Yevgeny Zamyatin: The Essential, the Superfluous, and Textual Noise," Beehler states that "to speak of revolution and heresy is to speak of a certain relationship with the law, and it is the ambiguity of this relationship — of the interdependence of revolution and law, heresy and dogma — that interferes with any simple unproblematic understanding of these two terms." *Substance* 50 (1986) 48. This argument is borne out in *Antichthon* when Pope Clement, trying to find a historical precedent to help him make up his mind on Giordano Bruno's fate, sadly concludes that what is defined as heresy in one generation may become dogma in the next.
3. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. by Caryl Emerson, Michael Holquist, ed. by Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983) 428.
4. The importance of paradox in *Antichthon* has been discussed by Susan Whaley in her review of the novel *To the Bone* where she points out that "Language denotes paradox in this, Chris Scott's third novel," *Canadian Literature* 96 (Spring 1983) 122.
5. Chris Scott, *Antichthon* (Montreal: Quadrant Editions, 1982) 35. All further references appear in the text (*A*).
6. Chris Scott's italics.
7. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968) 10. My italics.
8. Chris Scott's italics.
9. Chris Scott's italics. 10. Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) 146. Author's italics.

Judith McCombs

Country, Politics, and Gender in Canadian Studies: A Report from Twenty Years of Atwood Criticism

Une lecture détaillée de la plupart des critiques d'un auteur donné révèle souvent que, sous ces textes, se cache un deuxième texte ou sous-texte contenant des thèmes clés ou des prédilections fréquentes. L'étude de ces deuxièmes textes peut nous renseigner sur les origines, les allégeances politiques ou le sexe de leur auteur. Ainsi, les écrits de Margaret Atwood ont suscité entre 1967 et le milieu de 1987 environ mille comptes rendus ou essais de la part de critiques américains et anglo-canadiens des deux sexes. Dans ces écrits, plusieurs thèmes reviennent, dont celui de «chaleur» qui fera l'objet de la présente étude.

Depuis les comptes rendus du deuxième livre de poésie de Atwood effectués par des Canadiens mâles jusqu'aux critiques de son sixième roman The Handmaid's Tale *écrites par des Américains et des Canadiens des deux sexes, on remarque que le thème de chaleur émotionnelle revient constamment. On discute de la quantité de chaleur contenue dans les écrits ou encore du besoin d'une plus grande chaleur amoureuse qui s'y retrouve. Si on considère les éloges que suscite ce thème de la part des critiques versus la dévalorisation de la froideur, du manque d'amour, du désespoir, du pouvoir, de la logique et de l'austérité, on peut se demander si les poèmes et romans d'un «Martin» Atwood, disons, auraient suscité le même type de critique. Plus précisément, on peut remarquer que les critiques sont à la recherche dans chacun des nouveaux livres de Atwood, de plus de chaleur, d'une chaleur plus intensément personnelle, ou encore de plus de compassion politique. On peut aussi retracer le thème de la chaleur dans les*

critiques d'autres questions esthétiques, morales, et politiques dont sont empreints les écrits de Atwood: critiques sociales; féminisme; nationalisme canadien; le statut de vedette de Atwood et son image publique; satire et ironie; éléments mythiques, comiques et gothiques; transformations spirituelles et personnelles; thèmes de la nature; thèmes humanitaires et humanistes.

Criticism, in Canadian studies as elsewhere, aims to say something about the literature being critiqued. Criticism, when the individual reviews and scholarly essays are studies as a group, often says something else, as well, about the critiquers, whose overlapping voices may speak in chorus to reveal the critiquers' particular allegiances, of country, politics, or gender. In the case of Margaret Atwood, the past twenty years of Canadian studies have produced, by mid-1987, over one thousand reviews and essays from Canadian and American men and women of varying persuasions; a comprehensive reading of these reviews and essays reveals a second text, or subtext, of key, recurring themes and predilections — among them warmth, the theme examined here.[1]

Warmth — its sufficiency, or its lack, or a perceived need for more of it — has been for the last twenty years a touchstone in the boundary-crossing mosaic of Atwood criticism. Warmth was significantly *not* a critical issue in the 1967 laudatory reviews, by Canadian men, of Atwood's first book, *The Circle Game* poems, which won the Governor General's Award that year. But the lack of warmth and the need for warmth became suddenly, a critical chorus with the 1969 positive reviews, by Canadian men, of Atwood's second book, *The Animals in That Country*.

Virtually every Canadian reviewer praised Atwood's second book of poems intellectually, and aesthetically, but voiced his misgivings about the emotional content. Robert Gibbs gave high praise to a controlled, exciting, but uncomfortable book, with perhaps more to admire than to love. A.W. Purdy found "soul-stirring, awesomely analytical, penetrating" poems, but a fearful lack of cheer, and a paranoia of a "Poet Besieged." Most explicitly, Tom Marshall wondered whether Atwood's "by-now-characteristic cool ... is not likely to harden soon into a mannerism. Her poems are beautifully made and always intelligent, but a little inhuman." Most disarmingly, Douglas Barbour and David Helwig wanted more of the poet's few warm love poems.[2]

One may consider here whether the expressed need for warmth, humanity, love, represents a chorus of gender-based assumptions? i.e., assumptions about what a woman writer, read as a woman, should provide for the reader? Or, to consider the question from another angle, would the same work, by one Martin Atwood, have evoked the same warmth-needing critical responses?[3]

In the following years, 1969-70, an assumed sufficiency of warmth, or a perceived lack of it, underlay critical judgments of whether *The Edible Woman*'s characters were realistic or not; whether they were worth the reader's empathy, or whether they were too non-human and empty for the novel to succeed; the issue or warmth also underlay perceptions of *The Edible Woman*'s themes and genres, as misleading, satiric, or realistic.

Political positions are evident here: where reviewers endorsed *The Edible Woman*'s anti-consumer-society themes, as George Woodcock and others did, the characters' distances and defences were seen as symptoms, caused by the real, distorted and distorting, society. Men's reactions to feminism were explicit in a number of reviews from both sided of the border: Melvin Maddocks' *Timely* and widely-quoted review relished the new, unladylike, bizarre, nightmare humor. Robin Skelton gave *The Edible Woman* high praise as a fable and as a Swiftian sexual satire, entitled by definition to unreal characters; but still he found the book disquieting, and lacking human presence, tenderness and love.[4]

The few 1969-70 reviews by women are, in contrast, explicitly empathetic reactions to feminism, which show a kindred assumption, from both sided of the border, that Atwood's voice and characters were warm enough for the conditions of contemporary life, and very real, even funny. Canadian Anne Montagnes presciently identified — in 1969 — *The Edible Woman*'s *anorexia nervosa*, at a time when other reviewers read those symptoms as literally improbable, and either symbolically true or dislikably distorted. In 1970, in the States, Mona Van Duyn's review of *The Animals in That Country* empathized with the poet's fears and alienation, and ended by wishing a kindred writer well; and Millicent Bell's review of *The Edible Woman* found a delightful feminist black humor that functioned as a truth-telling dementia, to answer a lying sanity.[5]

The question of warmth divided many of the 1970-71 Canadian reviews, from both genders, of Atwood's third and fourth books of poetry, the pioneer *Journals of Susanna Moodie* and the lyric *Procedures for Underground*. Robin Skelton, who identified a haunting, Kafkaesque Gothic — a genre which stresses fear, not warmth — gave the highest praise to both books. Those who valued warmth and love most highly, as did Jean Gibbs and Peter Stevens, praised *Procedures for Underground*, which ends with loving affirmations, most highly. Those who followed *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*'s Canadian identity "Afterword," which suggested that Atwood's fearful, divided pioneer hero embodied contemporary Canadians' schizophrenic alienation, gave *Journals* the highest praise; see Elizabeth Brewster and Douglas Barbour. A.W. Purdy's frankly ambivalent 1971 discussion found, on the one hand, no real humor, very little love, no joy, only Atwood's "hard cold look at the human condition"; but, on the other hand, convincing realism, Atwood's love of the country, and a magnificent book.[6]

Power Politics, Atwood's fifth book of poetry, brought the issue of warmth to a head; from 1971-72, Canadian reviewers of both genders praised highly *Politics'* realism, power, and craft, but disagreed about whether readers ethically should, or aesthetically could, like such cool, cruel poetry. Elizabeth Brewster voiced a widespread response when she found *Power Politics* a powerful and disturbing whole. Peter Stevens, who conceded the contemporary, Laingian truths and very skillful poetry of *Politics'* "Deep-Freezing," withdrew from its cool, hard, cruel language. Joan Harcourt, who had praised *Procedures for Underground* for its haunting nightmares, found *Politics* too deliberately controlled and all-too-nightmarishly real — where was compassion, or kindness, or joy? George Woodcock, who focussed not on *Politics'* sexual struggle but on its objective imagery and toughness, affirmed Atwood's personal poetic code and necessary survival ethnic, of a cactus-like tenacity "Beyond truth": "yes tough / rind & spikes but doing / the best it can."[7]

II

Critical perceptions of Atwood's work, and the warmth in it, changed, radically and repeatedly, after her first Canadian best sellers, the 1972 *Surfacing* and *Survival*. The issue of warmth was almost simultaneously overwhelmed, and reshaped, and magnified by the issues of Canadian nationalism and women's liberation — and, in Canada, by the issue of Atwood's new status in her country's literature and politics.

From 1972-73, Canadian reviewers hailed *Surfacing*, almost unanimously, as a Canadian and a mythic landmark. Christina Newman acclaimed Atwood the new literary champion of her generation's new, and no longer colonial, Canadian consciousness. Margaret Laurence became "evangelical" in her praise of *Surfacing's* deeply human concerns and archetypal quest for the lost gods and the mortal parents. And, though acclaim (and a few complaints) came from both genders, one notes that an unusual two-thirds of *Surfacing's* Canadian literary journal reviews came from women, who may well have been particularly keen, in the early seventies, to celebrate a woman's work.[8]

In the States, where both genders gave *Surfacing* serious praise as a feminist and a wilderness novel, literary and political feminists recognized Atwood, in 1973, as a major modern writer. My own essay celebrated *Power Politics* as an inevitable, empowering, woman-centered breakthrough in love poetry. In *Ms.*, Joan Larkin justified Atwood's and the Surfacer's seeming coldness as a passionate human advocacy for all our planet's life, and *Power Politics'* "They are hostile nations" poem as a lovers' politics of shared survival. Marge Piercy, who used *Survival's* victim positions as a key to Atwood's seven creative books, found not coldness but a socially-caused political and economic alienation in Atwood's heroes; Piercy's socialist

feminism saw Atwood's searches, for warm personal solutions and individual escapes from victimhood, as dangerous dead-end pursuits.[9]

Meanwhile, in Canada, the 1972-73 *Surfacing* celebration was taking place alongside the 1972-73 *Survival* celebration, which has abruptly turned into controversy: the combination made Atwood the newest and most visible star of Anglophone Canadian literature. *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* had at first been hailed, in late 1972, by both genders, in a wave of enthusiastic nationalist identification, which seemed to sweep away concerns of womanly warmth. Phyllis Grosskurth bore witness that this country's "most important book" ever had "seized me, a Canadian, by the shoulders and forced me to look unflinchingly into the mirror." John Ayre profiled Atwood as a young cultural nationalist and "psychic iconoclast," who offered "nothing pretty or reassuring," and demanded "that we desert our colonialist mentalities."[10]

Then, in the winter of 1972-73, George Woodcock and Gloria Onley found *Survival*'s victim thesis troubling — was Canadian literature so truly, or so uniquely, victim-prone? — and Robin Mathews denounced Atwood's victim thesis, as a liberal, colonial establishment politics of class-biased alienation, victimization, and surrender. The ensuing 1973 *Survival* polemics were, in contrast to the Canadian and American acclaim for *Surfacing*, conducted primarily, though not exclusively, by Canadian men, who polarized on political, ethical, generational, and literary grounds; and whose arguments at times recalled earlier critiques of *Power Politics* as cold and cruel.[11] Now the mere longing for warmth faded, as images of a dangerous or cutting author, and clichés of bitchery, appeared. Malcolm Ross charged that as critic Atwood had bent Northrop Frye's "garrison mentality" into a stiff metal cup "clamped down hard on the wriggling body of Canadian writing," containing some but leaving much more "mangled or headless or untouched without." Frank Davey depicted Atwood the "writer as power politician," the *Politics* persona as a "castrating bitch," the two novels' narrators as "rigidly controlled, if not contrived," and *Survival* as "suppressing" writers who did not fit its victim thesis, distorting others, and "culture-fixing," perhaps, "an untouchable canon of CanLit according to Atwood."[12]

No one found sweet cheering warmth in *Survival*; but, reconsidering in mid-1973, George Woodcock found positive ethical, political, and personal strengths in *Surfacing*'s clear courage, and in *Survival*'s personal ("Beyond truth, / tenacity") ethic, salutary cultural nationalism, and personal journey of growth and hope.[13]

By 1974, the best-selling *Survival* was well on its way to becoming Canada's most influential work of literary criticism ever; and the *Survival* controversy was on the whole subsiding, except for Frank Davey, Robin Mathews, and a small number of like-minded controverters — virtually all Canadian men — who would continue, sporadically, to update and confirm their 1973 literary or political condemnations. T.D. MacLulich's irreverent

but highly relevant 1974 Wild West "*Survival* Shoot-Out" dramatized the underlying issues of academic territory, gender, and politics: the only lady "poaching" among the academic men gamekeepers and gunslingers, Atwood's "cocky brashness" had somehow "aspired to more than merely feminine decorative status." Furthermore, her anti-colonialist politics were both insulting and challenging, because instead of blaming the Americans for exploiting Canadians, she seemed to think Canadians should figure out some way to stop being victims.[14]

By 1974-75, it was clear that both Atwood's 1972 books, *Surfacing* and *Survival*, had impelled, followed, and coincided with Canadian nationalism, internationally reawakened feminism, and dissident and counter-cultural revelations. With the newly-blossoming fields of women's and Canadian studies proclaiming the personal as the political, and the literary as the national, critical essays from Canada and the States saw Atwood's work not as lacking warmth, but as articulating the hitherto-suppressed realities of women's and Canadians' lives.

1974-75 Canadian essays affirmed feminist, nationalist, and Laingian revelations in Atwood's work. Gloria Onley's "Power Politics in Bluebeard's Castle" linked Atwood's ironic inversion of courtly love, and depersonalization of sex, in *Power Politics* and the two novels, to feminist and radical, Laingian critiques of a sadomasochistic, alienating, patriarchal Western social mythology. Margret Andersen rewrote *Survival*'s map paragraph for *Atlantis*' first issue: "What a lost woman needs is a map of the territory, with her own position marked on it..." Robert Kroetsch, speculating on the Canadian need to *de*mythologize a foreign, British- or American-defined experience and language, found that in *Surfacing* "The terror lies not in her going insane but in her going sane." Gary Ross read *The Circle Game*, and Catherine McLay, *Surfacing*, as healing, Laingian journeys, where an alienated self achieved reintegration and trust.[15]

Similar and parallel 1974-75 essays came from the States; Susan Wood Glicksohn affirmed Atwood's truth-telling, alien "Martian Point of View." Susan Fromberg Schaeffer found in *Surfacing* not feminist anger, but a mortal's healing quest for her lost mother. Feminist critics Karen F. Stein and Cathy N. Davidson set *Surfacing* in newly-defined traditions of women's truth-telling "madness" and awakening.[16]

By 1974, Atwood had been widely recognized as Anglophone Canada's foremost writer; but while scholarly essays from there and the States were confirming reviewers' praises, a smaller but intensely articulate Canadian backlash was also developing. Negative reviews, from very few women and a small number of men — including the 1974 guide to Canadian literature from Frank Davey — found some combination of Atwood's star status, personal image, and her books' personae and themes, to be icy, dominating, bitchlike, witchlike, or Medusa-like.[17]

In spring 1974, George Galt had celebrated *Surfacing*'s year of triumph in the same issue of *Canadian Forum* that printed a crude satire of an anti-

male, devouring-octopus Atwood. And the spring 1974 *Canadian Literature* had printed, along with the scholarly praise from Gloria Onley and Gary Ross, the most intense and poetic formulation of the cold complaint to date: Linda Rogers' portrait of "Margaret the Magician," which found in Atwood's books no compassion, no humanity, no ultimate reality of life-giving warmth, only cold, dead love; and in their author's cover photos, a hypnotizing ice-woman.[18]

As if in reply, the back-cover blurb of Atwood's 1974 book of poems, *You Are Happy*, promised an "intense and moving" journey "from the negative aspects of love to the joyously positive ones."[19] In Canada the fall 1974-75 reviewers, of both genders, reiterated their already polarized responses to Atwood's star status, plus the womanly warmth and power themes of *The Animals in That Country*'s and *Power Politics*' reviews. Women and men fans praised Atwood's transformations; almost everyone found the last section's warm love poems delightful, but a number — chiefly men — found the transformed animals overly negative, and the Circe persona displeasing.

A few Canadian men found Atwood's star status, image, and personae, quite displeasing. "We Are Not So Happy" with the former, Scott Lauder's frankly-titles review explained. Alan Pearson, who reviewed a "snaky-haired Medusa" — an image he had seen on a bookstore poster — borne "on the whinnying mares of nationalism and women's liberation," and a demon-haunted, defiant Brontëan spectre he had envisioned, critiques *You Are Happy*'s icily deliberate structure; he wanted more celebratory lyrics, not bleak personal exorcism. George Amabile, who thought Atwood's *Surfacing-Survival* successes had driven her poetic consciousness into ambush, judged *You Are Happy*'s Circe poems its best section; but he termed Circe "the archetypal bitch," filled "with sexual coldness and intellectual savagery," and critiqued the final section's persona as alienated from her own physical pleasures.[20]

You Are Happy's most positive 1975 assessments also came from Canadian men. Tom Marshall, who had most explicitly opened the coldness debate with his 1969 review of *The Animals in That Country*, now defended *You Are Happy*'s affirmations against Toronto's usual bleak and morbid, *Power-Politics*-revisited reviews; he now found Atwood facing our most difficult facts, and "putting the case for joy so minimally and so well." Ken Norris, who had previously rejected the Ice-Mother anti-romanticism of Atwood's poetry, now, after *Surfacing*'s "total depth of feeling" and *Survival*'s Canadian struggles and respect for life, celebrated her journey, as woman and as writer, from bleakness to beauty, from *The Circle Game*'s individual struggles to *You Are Happy*'s culminating, commingled feeling. Christopher Levenson appreciated the animal victims' and Circe's shrewd hits against man's arrogance, and the last section's affirming journey of equals. Only Andrew Scott, whose mythopoetic and formal analysis praised most the Circe sections' biting satire, questioned the perhaps artificial

arrangement of the final love poems, as creating a less bleak vision that might not be heartfelt.[21]

If for Canadian Atwood critics 1974-75 were years of star and ice, 1976 was a year of star and joys: Atwood produced, in the spring, both a *Selected Poems* that reviewers almost unanimously welcomed, and a baby daughter whose media coverage added maternal warmth to Atwood's public image; and in the fall, a *Lady Oracle* that reviewers almost unanimously found delightfully funny.

Almost every Canadian reviewer of the *Selected Poems* praised, or else acclaimed, Atwood's achievements, affirmations, and growth; and especially *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, *Power Politics*, and *You Are Happy*'s animal transformations and its positive, loving, warmth-concluding poems. Hardly anyone wanted more warmth from the *Selected*; Gary Geddes, Linda Sandler, and J.R. (Tim) Struthers championed Atwood's anti-romantic views, magic, craft, wit, irony, and necessary subversions against earlier reviewers' complaints of coldness. Even Linda Rogers, who alone saw the *Selected* as "reptilian artifacts, all jewel beautiful" but "formaldehyde" cold, conceded "some humanity" in Susanna Moodie and the "angry virago" of *Power Politics*.[22]

Atwood's *Selected* cuts and chronological arrangement, which gave *You Are Happy* and its final love poems the implicitly culminating end, did favor the theme of a personal journey to warmth. Was that warmth-enhancing arrangement — here and in the 1970 *Procedures for Underground* and in the 1978 *Two-Headed Poems* — made in response to earlier warmth criticisms?

(If, for a moment, one jumps the chronological order of this essay, then Andrew Scott's 1975 suggestion of Atwood's perhaps artificially arranged concluding affirmations may be extended a little farther, by contrasting Canadian reviewers' responses to Atwood's 1977 and 1983 collections of short stories. Most reviewers praised the 1977 retrospective *Dancing Girls* stories, but many disliked its unloving, if realistic, characters, and, at times, phrased their critiques so as to echo earlier reviews of *Power Politics*. Atwood's second book of stories, the 1983 *Bluebeard's Egg*, began and ended with loving, apparently autobiographical reminiscences of the author's parents; reviewers almost unanimously praised those warm parental portraits.)

In the States as well as Canada, almost all reviewers found the fall 1976 *Lady Oracle* a very entertaining comedy and satire; for most reviewers, that was enough; others, in Canada, still wanted more warmth. Marian Engel relished *Oracle*'s wicked, deadpan humor, skillful social criticism, and accurate — if kindly — satire of Toronto literati. Patricia Morley appreciated its multi-level Gothic horrors and James-Reaneyesque realism — genres not noted for warmth. Most intensely, Wilfred Cude vindicated the shallow feelings and trite escapism of Atwood's characters as didactic satire, aimed at Canadians' spiritual poverty and wallowing self-pity.[23]

A few Canadian women were, however, quite displeased with the so-successful Atwood's uncaring satire, or flat, uninteresting, Ontario WASP heroines. More positively, Brian Vintcent found hilarious comic-strip caricatures, but wanted at least one loveable, or at least sympathetic, character. I.M. Owen, who praised seriously Atwood's complex and astonishingly funny third novel, but not her cold, repellent *Surfacing*, regretted the "ice-jam" that still inhibited the writer Atwood — not the person — "from expressing warmth, delight, joy."[24]

1976-78 were milestone years for Atwood criticism, as a remarkable surge of literary, feminist, and theological essays from Canada and the States — on all Atwood's work, but especially on *Surfacing* and *You Are Happy* — established her salient place in the new feminist and Canadian canons. Though these 1976-78 essays still perceived differing kinds, amounts, and sufficiencies of warmth in Atwood's work, the largest number were clearly affirming — or celebrating — Atwood's mythic, spiritual, feminist, and personal transformations. And, in the same years, many other essays ran counter to earlier perceptions of cold by recognizing Atwood's underlying ghost-story, Gothic, and female Gothic elements — whose genres, be definition, fostered fear, not warmth.

A number of these 1976-78 essays remain germinal for Atwood critics, and readers, of the 1980s: see particularly Roberta Rubenstein's 1976 analysis of Atwood's multi-level, archetypal quest in *Surfacing* and certain poems, which was to become a basis for Josie P. Campbell's mythic 1978 Hero*ine* of a Thousand Faces reading, and Russell Brown's culminating 1980 meditations on Atwood's numinous "Sacred Wells" in an ironically depicted, mass-culture-inundated world.[25]

In the States, the winter 1976 *Signs* featured feminist theologians on Atwood: Carol P. Christ replied to Marge Piercy's 1973 political feminist critique of Atwood's warm personal solutions by defining a woman's spiritual, not social, quest, which reconnected the Surfacer to the great transforming powers of the universe. In the same *Signs*, Judith Plaskow questioned *Surfacing*'s woman-nature and woman-reproduction treatment as potentially oppressive. Christ's germinal 1976 analysis, revised in her 1980 *Diving Deep and Surfacing*, combined with Francine du Plessix Gray's widely read 1977 "Nature as the Nunnery" to celebrate *Surfacing*'s female visionary tradition, and to influence feminist and theological scholarship.[26]

In 1978, Barbara Hill Rigney's *Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel* followed Christ and Laing in celebrating the Surfacer's quasi-religious, therapeutic descent; and Peter Slater's *Dynamics of Religion* affirmed, from a kindred theological, Laingian, and *Survival* perspective, the Surfacer's individual transformation and escape from victimhood. In 1981, Canadian theologian William James, who surveyed Canadian critics' cold-condemning versus life-affirming perceptions of *Surfacing*, defended its ironic but realistic and affirming heroism.[27]

1977 was a particular milestone year: the first collection of critical essays, the still-indispensable but now out-of-print *Malahat Review: Margaret Atwood: A Symposium*, edited by Linda Sandler, appeared that January. On a scholarly level, 1977 was a year of star and partial ice: for while most of 1977's germinal essays affirmed Atwood's affirmations, or genres, a few found cold logic, hysteria, or an unfortunate Gorgon figure.

In the 1977 *Malahat: Atwood*, Eli Mandel praised Atwood's compelling and somehow liberating toughness, identified her abortion-haunted Gothic and female Gothic fears, and found *Surfacing*'s heroine an enduring if "tormented girl." Tom Marshall, confirming his 1975 praise of *You Are Happy*'s earthy affirmations over the icy, if accurate, analyses of Atwood's earlier work, now praised also her "emotional pioneering" and *Surfacing*'s "healing madness."[28]

From 1977-78, U.S. and Canadian literary feminists celebrated Atwood's transformations, subversions, women-nature affinities, and social mythology. In spring 1977, Jane Lilienfeld acclaimed *You Are Happy*'s Circe poems, as women's new, creative powers transforming men's traditional "love" to new equalities; and Carolyn Allen acclaimed Atwood's realistically and progressively transformed female mythology in *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, *Surfacing*, and the Circe poems. In 1978 Jean Mallinson championed *You Are Happy*'s wit, irony, and sensuous joys, and Circe's subversions of the heroic stance, against Frank Davey's 1973-74 doctrinaire projections and George Amabile's 1975 distorting preconceptions of womanliness. Other 1977-78 essays, from Valerie Trueblood and myself, saw not cold inhumanity in Atwood's poetry and *Surfacing*, but a female kinship with a vulnerable natural world, and an empowering woman-nature myth; Susan J. Rosowski's 1978 paper saw in *Lady Oracle* our real, and really Gothic-horror-ridden, social mythology.[29]

The few but salient and still-germinal 1977 cold critiques came from Canadians. In the *Malahat: Atwood*, Rosemary Sullivan found, along with *Surfacing*'s Canadian themes and shamanic rituals, a logic-limited, ironic, imprisoning circle game that extended from the poetry through *Surfacing*, and prevented love, community or belief. Ultimately, Sullivan concluded, Atwood had settled for logic, irony, and ghost-story formula, instead of vision. In mid-1977, Frank Davey found "Atwood's Gorgon Touch" in all her poetry, from the "girl with the gorgon touch" of her 1961 undergraduate *Double Persephone* chapbook through the *Journals*, *Politics*, and *You Are Happy*'s Circe. For Davey, Atwood's artist-woman-transformer was a pathologically empowered Medusa, turning love and life to stony art as she struggled, unsuccessfully, to escape from art to mortality.[30]

Two key 1977-78 essays from Canadian men celebrated Atwood's poetry but critiqued a Freudian-perceived sexual frigidity. John Wilson Foster found "exciting transformations" and essential Canadian archetypes, particularly in *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, but also a "barely controlled hysteria" and a "morbid dread" concerning birth and female

sexuality. Similarly, T.D. MacLulich, who traced *The Edible Woman*'s haunting but distorted and "uneasy appeal" to its folkloric transformations, found a childish, irrational fear of sex and pregnancy, and a rejection of femininity.[31]

1980 was a new milestone year: the first book of Atwood criticism, Sherrill Grace's *Violent Duality*, countered Robin Mathews' political indictments and Frank Davey's static Gorgon oppositions by maintaining *Survival*'s struggle for affirmations, and by defining Atwood's dialectic creative processes. Concurrently Davey himself found a modern optimism and a healing, cathartic comic structure in Atwood's first three novels.[32]

In 1981 the first book of Atwood essays, the still-germinal *Art of Margaret Atwood*, edited by Arnold E. Davidson and Cathy N. Davidson, appeared. No critic in *Art* faulted Atwood for coldness; a number of these essays implicitly countered such complaints, by recognizing national, literary, mythic, or factual sources of Atwood's non-joyous elements. Sandra Djwa and myself appreciated the Canadian and underlying Gothic elements in Atwood's poetry. Catherine McLay discerned in *The Edible Woman* an underlying Frygian romance structure that culminated in a celebration of new freedom and rebirth. Annis Pratt's feminist Jungian analyses, in *Art* and in her 1981 *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, defined and celebrated the Surfacer's rebirth journey. Robert Lecker, who found only a corrupted romance structure in Atwood's first three novels, accepted that fragmentation and duplicity as a mirroring of contemporary realities. Clara Thomas, who contrasted her female students' laughing identification with *Lady Oracle* to her male students' resistance, defined in Atwood's third novel a new Ellen Moers category, the Fool-Heroine.[33]

III

As Sherrill Grace's still-germinal 1980 *Violent Duality* first suggested, Atwood's creative work entered a new stage with the 1978 *Two-Headed Poems* and the 1979 *Life Before Man*.[34] That second stage, of more realistic and more political, less Gothic work, may have ended with the 1986 *Selected Poems II*. So far, through mid-1987, warmth has continued to be a key issue in critics' perceptions of Atwood's new poetry and fiction.

Critics of the three new books of poetry — the 1978 *Two-Headed Poems*, the 1981 *True Stories*, and the 1984 *Interlunar* — have either celebrated new, more personal, and maternal warmth, or faulted its lack. Atwood's new, more widely political poems are sometimes avoided, but more often praised for humanity and compassion. In 1979 Douglas Barbour, who praised the greater hope and humanitarianism of *Two-Headed Poems*' daughter/grandmother and Amnesty International poems, found also the usual Atwood country of Gothic Ambiguity and too-true paranoia — "Or do we simply remember only the bleakest versions of her vision?" In the Davidsons' 1981 *Art of Margaret Atwood*, Lorna Irvine celebrated *Two-*

Headed Poems as Atwood's first "dominantly female world," where, after so many books of pain, masculine power, and negatively depicted fertility and children, the matriarchal generations at last connect, and a real, welcomed child appears.[35]

From 1981-82, Canadian reviewers gave *True Stories* even more praise than *Two-Headed Poems*, for having even more of the same qualities: new, more personal affirmations and responsible, human poems on the world's admittedly real political horrors. But only Ann Mandel, who in 1982 linked Atwood's themes to Michel Foucault's political theories, perceived in *True Stories* an essential unity of Atwood's personal love poems, poetics, and political stories.[36]

The 1983-85 poetry essays from Canadians continued to pursue in *Two-Headed Poems* and *True Stories* newer, more intimate, or more encompassing, warmth and affirmations. In the 1983 *Margaret Atwood: Language, Text, and System*, edited by Sherrill E. Grace and Lorraine Weir, the editors' own essays stressed *Two-Headed Poems*'s new affirmations of nature and family, or earth and shamanic vision quest, and praised Atwood's ongoing *Survival* struggles, or Julian-Jaynesian language oracles. The other 1983 *Language* critics praised, for differing reasons, the personal poems of *Two-Headed* and *True Stories* over their political poems and the first stage poetry. Anglican priest Barbara Blakely's feminist reading celebrated most *Two-Headed*'s culminating female transformations and consecrated bread. Eli Mandel found its grandmothers poem a profoundly human and woman's poem that went beyond Atwood's earlier magic. George Woodcock valued especially the tender, daily, personal poems begun in *You Are Happy* and most evident in *Two-Headed Poems* but continuing through *True Stories*.[37]

American and Canadian critics' perceptions of poetic warmth divided, from 1984-87, along lines of gender and feminism. Jerome H. Rosenberg's 1984 *Margaret Atwood*, which followed David Helwig's 1969 need for more warmth, now faulted *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* for "cold community" and *Power Politics* for negativism, and praised most the wider love, warmth, and compassion of *Two-Headed Poems*. Frank Davey's 1984 *Margaret Atwood: A Feminist Poetics*, which substantially revised his 1977 Gorgon essay, avoided an overt quest for newer, greater warmth, but preferred what he termed Atwood's "'female' sublanguage" to her controlling "male" language, and stressed Atwood's use of more and more male violence, from *Two-Headed Poems* on.[38]

Jean Mallinson's contrasting 1985 *Canadian Writers* praise of Atwood's poetry appreciated most the new daily, sometimes shared or loving, epiphanies of *True Stories*. In the States, other feminists placed Atwood's earlier books in newly-defined literary traditions that affirmed women's and Canadians' perspectives, but not passive warmth. Estella Lauter's archetypal 1984 *Women as Mythmakers* celebrated a radical *re*mythologizing of the quest myth, from Circe's perspective. Alicia Ostriker's 1986 *Stealing the Language* places *Power Politics* among powerful but ultimately entrapped

critiques of gender-polarized patterns. And, in 1987, Annis Pratt defined a Frygian Medusa stone/woman archetype in Anglophone Canadian poetry from E.J. Pratt through Atwood and Pat Lowther.[39]

Canadian reviewers did not perceive in the 1984 *Interlunar*'s mystic nature poetry (which, except for Frank Davey's brief 1984 mention, is not covered in the criticism discussed above) a warmer, wider human love. About half the men found *Interlunar* too cold, dark, brutal, and unhappy; other men, and a few women, praised *Interlunar*'s national and cyclic, affirming myths, as Ronald B. Hatch and Anne Blott did in 1985. George Woodcock appreciated, in his updated 1987 *Northern Spring* essay, *Interlunar*'s serenity and almost-animist empathy, but still felt closer to the warmer sections of preceding books.[40]

Earlier, bleakness versus warmth had been key issues in the American and Canadian reviews of Atwood's new, 1979 novel, *Life Before Man*. In the States, *Life* was widely hailed, by both genders, as Atwood's first real, realistic novel, and therefore her best; even its melancholy was judged powerful. In Canada, almost half the reviewers found *Life* bleak, banal, lacking compassion, hopeless, or Atwood's coolest and bleakest: but almost all the Canadian women, and about one-third of the Canadian men, nonetheless praised *Life Before Man*'s perceptive realism.

Part of the initial Canadian displeasure involved Atwood's star status; even George Woodcock, who reacted against *Life*'s stellar promotion, also reacted, ethically and aesthetically, against its Henry Jamesian but "anti-novelistic fiction" where human life was not worth cherishing. But even Sherrill Grace found a repressed, selfish hero and a grey, empty book.[41]

Later, 1981-86 critiques have mainly praised *Life Before Man*'s moral realism and its hero's struggles. Cathy N. Davidson and Arnold E. Davidson's 1981 *Art* essay found a strong, indomitable, evolving hero and, as did Linda Hutcheon's 1983 *Language* essay, themes of moral responsibility. In 1986 Ildikó de Papp Carrington, who perceived *Life*'s underlying romance structure and Julian Jaynesian internalized, demonic doubles, affirmed the hero's strong parental responsibility and her struggles to survive; and Catherine McLay found a compelling and compassionate depiction of the characters' bleak, lonely, isolated lives.[42]

Reviews of Atwood's 1981 *Bodily Harm* were mostly positive or mixed in Canada, mostly positive in the States, from both genders; the consensus found *Bodily Harm*'s politics realistic, its hero sympathetic, and its end a presumably safe and therefore satisfying return of the truth-bearing hero. About a third of the Canadian reviewers of both genders found *Bodily Harm* too bleak, flat, didactic, or anti-male; some again found its author too much praised.

The majority of 1983-97 *Bodily Harm* critiquers have clearly affirmed its moral politics, human compassion, and responsible, feminist heroes. Ildikó de Papp Carrington found, in her 1983 descent and 1987 *Canadian Writers* essays, healing hands, moral compassion for human suffering, and a

denunciation of human evil. Two other Canadians, however, who in 1983-84 faulted *Harm*'s compassion-promising cover blurb and Atwood's canonization, or her popularity and *Chatelaine* cover image, seemed to echo Linda Rogers' 1974 portrait of Atwood as a loveless, cold "Magician". B.W. Powe, who found "no centre" and "no love" in any Atwood novel, found in *Harm* only another one of her clichéd, sound-alike personae, with her safely, "vaguely leftist," "consciousness-raised" politics of fashionably "*personal* revolution." Somewhat differently, Jennifer Waelti-Walters, who found "no love, no compassion" in *Harm*, denounced on feminist grounds an "unrelentingly vicious" political "sub-text" of "overt misogyny."[43]

The two 1984 *Atwood* books were mainly appreciative, although Jerome H. Rosenberg, who conceded *Life*'s moral realism and *Harm*'s moral compassion, still wanted less banality and more affirmation. Frank Davey, who explored female comedy and Virgilian maze patterns in *Bodily Harm*, found a hero capable of powerful "feminine naming," an Aeneas-like descent, and social responsibility.[44]

From 1985-87, American and Canadian essays celebrated *Bodily Harm*'s feminism, existentialism, and humanism. Roberta Rubenstein's 1985 essay and her 1987 *Boundaries of the Self: Culture, Gender, Fiction* praised highly *Harm*'s feminist existential, personal and political hero. Lorna Irvine's 1986 *Subversion* celebrated *Harm*'s refusal of patriarchal "femininity" and its new, politically subversive, life-advocating female language and hero. And, in the 1987 *Margaret Atwood: Reflection and Reality*, edited by Beatrice Mendez-Egle, Mary K. Kirtz similarly affirmed Atwood's didactic, moral humanism, and her hero's emotional and spiritual re-connection with all humanity.[45]

Atwood's 1985 novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, won her second Governor General's Award in Canada, and became her first U.S. best-seller. Reviewers since in both countries have mostly praised, or occasionally faulted, along gender and political lines, this new novel's bleak, repressive future American regime of Gilead. Women, feminists, leftists, and liberals have perceived a frighteningly plausible *1984*, whose chilling bleakness was all too justified by existing repressive and anti-women trends; such reviewers found *The Handmaid's Tale*'s politics both woman-oriented and universally human. The majority of reviewers has clearly empathized with an articulate, circumscribed hero, whose unwritten woman's story at least survives; and has clearly experienced Atwood's bleak cautionary tale as aesthetically, humanly, and politically illuminating, even cheering.

In Canada, Sarah Sheard, who in fall 1985 placed *The Handmaid's Tale* in a prison-book genre, relished its wicked games, its heroism and eventually triumphant self-sacrifice, and the reader's characteristically genre-heightened awareness of real-life's precious pleasures. Similarly, in spring 1986 in the States, Cathy N. Davidson's *Ms.* praise found gripping suspense and optimism, not despair; and John Updike's *New Yorker*

endorsement found a feminist liberal's "lovely subversive hymn to our ordinary life."[46]

Other American feminists found diverse political and aesthetic virtues in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Barbara Ehrenreich, who weighed the arguments of an "intra-feminist polemic," found an absorbing tale, but a perspective too limited by the hero's depression and circumstances. Ann Snitow, who acclaimed the novel's feminist warning, began by acclaiming Atwood's bracingly cold, even burning, substitutes for passion. Catherine R. Stimpson praised Gilead's plausible, domesticated totalitarianism, and its author's boldly expanded, moral and political critiques.[47]

Some men in both countries, however, have approved but not enjoyed the bleak vision of a balmless Gilead, or have approved the politics so far as they went, but found them too narrow, domestic, male-affronting, or woman-centered; a very few found only a fizzle. On occasion the old displeasure with a too-much praised Atwood has also surfaced, more often in Canada than in the States. Two particular U.S. reviews, from Mary McCarthy and James J. Thompson, Jr., rejected Atwood's rigid or balmless Gilead regime, as an incredible, "palely lurid" but unfrightening satire of America, or as another ignorant bashing of the American Religious Right.[48]

Several 1987 critiquers have since emphasized hope, optimistic aims, and love in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Ann Yeoman found hope in the novel's enduring human love, but a chilling despair, or at best an ominous enigma, in its academic Epilogue; Coral Ann Howells, who found a strongly subversive, surprisingly lyric and erotic novel, affirmed its stubbornly surviving heterosexual love. Amin Malak read *The Handmaid's Tale* as a feminist dystopian critique of an imperfect present, a warning against future horrors, and an appeal for vigilance, tolerance, compassion, and women's identity. Barbara Hill Rigney's 1987 *Margaret Atwood* found, in both *Bodily Harm* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, heroes struggling against political oppression, and, as in *True Stories*' political and personal poems, love somehow persisting, even in a loveless world, even against atrocity and death.[49]

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Whatever Atwood's muse may next produce, two things seem clear: in the secondary subtext of Atwood criticism, warmth will continue to be a key, recurring, value-laden, and disputed issue: and, for those critics who want warmth most, or most especially from a woman writer, not every Atwood text will please.

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Notes

1. This paper has been revised since its 31 May presentation in the Critical Discourse Section of the 1987 International Canadian Studies Conference at Hamilton, Ontario. I am grateful to the Canadian Embassy for the 1985-86 Senior Fellowship under which this paper — an additional project — was written.
   Margaret Atwood's books have been published first in Toronto, Canada: the poetry by Oxford University Press, except as indicated; the fiction by McClelland and Stewart, except as indicated; the criticism by House of Anansi. Poetry: *The Circle Game*, Contact Press, 1966 (out of print); House of Anansi Press, 1967, 1978. *The Animals in That Country*, 1968. *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, 1970. *Procedures for Underground*, 1970. *Power Politics*, 1971. *You Are Happy*, 1974. *Selected Poems*, 1976. *Two-Headed Poems*, 1978. *True Stories*, 1981. *Interlunar*, 1984. *Selected Poems II: Poems Selected and New 1976-86*, 1986.
   Fiction: *The Edible Woman*, 1969. *Surfacing*, 1972. *Lady Oracle*, 1976. *Dancing Girls and Other Stories*, 1977. *Life Before Man*, 1979. *Bodily Harm*, 1981. *Bluebeard's Egg*, 1983. *Murder in the Dark: Short Fictions and Prose Poems*, Coach House Press, 1983. *The Handmaid's Tale*, 1985.
   Criticism: *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, 1972. *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose*, 1982.
   A verified bibliography of Atwood's books published in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain is provided in my *Critical Essays on Margaret Atwood*, Critical Essays on World Literature, ed. Robert Lecker (Boston, Mass.: G. K. Hall & Co., 1988) 293-4. As indicated in the notes, *CEMA* reprinted a number of the works cited here.
2. Robert Gibbs, review of *The Animals in That Country*, *Fiddlehead* 79 (March/April 1969) 117-8; A. W. Purdy, "Poet Besieged," *Canadian Literature* 39 (Winter 1969) 94-6, quoted 96; and Tom Marshall, review of *The Animals in That Country*, *The Dumbfounding*, by Margaret Avison, *Winter of the Luna Moth*, by Joe Rosenblatt, *Civil Elegies*, by Dennis Lee, *Quarry* 18:3 (Spring 1969) 53-4, quoted 53. Douglas Barbour, "Canadian Books," *Dalhousie Review* 48 (Winter 1968-69) 568-70; and David Helwig, review of *The Animals in That Country*, *Queen's Quarterly* 76 (Spring 1969) 161-2; reprinted in *CEMA*, 32-3.
3. This essay is indebted to Jean Mallinson's germinal analysis, "Ideology and Poetry: An Examination of Some Recent Trends in Canadian Criticism," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 3:1 (Winter 1978) 93-109. That certain Atwood poems and prose passages invite, or respond to, warmth critiques is a subject for another paper.
4. George Woodcock, "Are We All Emotional Cannibals?" *Toronto Star*, 13 September 1969, p. 13, and, slightly varied, as "The Symbolic Cannibals," *Canadian Literature* 42 (Autumn 1969) 98-100; reprinted, lightly revised, as part of "Margaret Atwood: Poet as Novelist," in *The Canadian Novel in the Twentieth Century*, ed. George Woodcock (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975) 312-27; that essay is reprinted in *CEMA*, 90-104. Melvin Maddocks, "That Consuming Hunger," *Time*, 26 October 1970, U.S. 116; Can. 82. Robin Skelton, review of *The Edible Woman*, *Malahat Review* 13 (January 1970) 108-9.
5. Anne Montagnes, "Two Novels That Unveil, Maybe, a Coming Phenomenon, the Species Torontoensis," *Saturday Night* 84: 11 (November 1969) 54, 56, 58; Mona Van Duyn, "Seven Women," *Poetry* 115 (March 1970) 432-3; and Millicent Bell, "The Girl on the Wedding Cake," *New York Times*, 18 October 1970, 51.
6. Robin Skelton, review of *Journals* and *Procedures*, *Malahat Review* 17 (January 1971) 133-4; reprinted in *CEMA*, 34-5; Jean Gibbs, review of *Procedures*, *Fiddlehead* 87 (November-December 1970) 61-5; and Peter Stevens, "Dark Mouth," *Canadian Literature* 50 (Autumn 1971) 91-2; reprinted in *CEMA*, 37-8. Elizabeth Brewster, "Dream Gave Life to Atwood Poems," *Edmonton Journal*, 10 April 1970, 61; Douglas Barbour, review of *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* and the CBC Canadian Poets Series LP read by Mia Anderson,

Canadian Forum 50 (September 1970) 225-6; and A. W. Purdy, "Atwood's Moodie," *Canadian Literature* 47 (Winter 1971) 80-4; quoted 82; reprinted in *CEMA*, 38-42.

7. Elizabeth Brewster, "Powerful Poetry," *Edmonton Journal*, 16 April 1971, 60; reprinted in *CEMA*, 35-6; Peter Stevens, "Deep-Freezing a Love's Continual Small Atrocities," *Globe Magazine*, 24 April 1971, 16; Joan Harcourt, reviews of *Procedures* and *Politics* in *Quarry* 20:1 (Winter 1971) 52-3, and no. 4 (1971) 70-3; and George Woodcock, "Margaret Atwood," *Literary Half-Yearly* 13:2 (July 1972) 233-42, and "Surfacing to Survive Notes of the Recent Atwood," *Ariel* 4:3 (July 1973) 16-17; reprinted (see note 4) as part of his 1975 "Poet as Novelist." Woodcock quoted the entire "Beyond Truth" poem from *Power Politics*, 36, in his 1972-1973, and 1975 essays.
8. Christina Newman, "In Search of a Native Tongue," *Maclean's*, September 1972, 88; and Margaret Laurence, Review of *Surfacing*, *Quarry* 22:4 (Spring 1973) 62-4, quoted 62. Newman and Laurence are reprinted in *CEMA*, 43-5 and 45-7.
9. Judith McCombs, "*Power Politics:* The Book and Its Cover," *Moving Out* 3:2 (1973) 54-69; Joan Larkin, "Soul Survivor," *Ms.*, May 1973, 33-5; reprinted in *CEMA*, 48-52; Larkin quotes Atwood's comments on women's and men's responses to *Power Politics*, as realistic or as cruel and anti-love. Marge Piercy, "Margaret Atwood: Beyond Victimhood," *American Poetry Review* 2 (November-December 1973) 41-4; reprinted in her *Parti-Colored Blocks for a Quilt*, Poets on Poetry (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982) 281-99; and in *CEMA*, 53-66.
10. Phyllis Grosskurth, "Truth — and a Major Talent," *Globe and Mail*, 28 October 1972, 33; and John Ayre, "Margaret Atwood and the End of Colonialism," *Saturday Night*, November 1972, 23-6; quoted 26.
11. G(eorge) W(oodcock), "Horizon of Survival," *Canadian Literature* 55 (Winter 73) 3-6; Gloria Onley, "Margaret Atwood: Surfacing in the Interests of Survival," *West Coast Review* 7:3 (January 1973) 51-4; and Robin Mathews, "Survival and Struggle in Canadian Literature: A Review of Margaret Atwood's *Survival*," *This Magazine Is About Schools* 6:4 (Winter 1972-73) 109-24; reprinted, revised, as "Margaret Atwood: Survivalism," in *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution*, edited by Gail Dexter (Toronto: Steel Rail Educational Publishing, 1978) 119-30.
12. Malcolm Ross, review of *Survival*, *Dalhousie Review* 53 (Spring 1973) 159-60, quoted 160; Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (Toronto: Anansi, 1971) quoted 225; and Frank D_vey, "Atwood Walking Backwards," *Open Letter*, a journal edited by Frank Davey, Second Series, no. 5 (Summer 1973) 74-84, quoted 75, 80, 77, 84, 83, and 83.
13. George Woodcock's "Surfacing to Survive"; see note 7.
14. The *Survival* controversy is discussed in more detail in Jerome H. Rosenberg's *Margaret Atwood*, Twayne's World Authors Series, Canadian Literature, ed. Robert Lecker (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984) 139-43; and in my *CEMA*, 7-8, 23. T. D. MacLulich, "The *Survival* Shoot-Out," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 1 (Winter 1974) 14-20; quoted 19.
15. Gloria Onley, "Power Politics in Bluebeard's Castle," *Canadian Literature* 60 (Spring 1974) 21-42; reprinted in *CEMA*, 70-89; Margret Andersen, "Feminism and the Literary Critic," *Atlantis* 1:1 (Fall 1975) 9-11, quoted 9; Robert Kroetsch, "Unhiding the Hidden: Recent Canadian Fiction," *Journal of Canadian Fiction* 3:3 (1974) 43-5; quoted 43; Gary Ross, "*The Circle Game*," *Canadian Literature* 60 (Spring 1974) 51-63; and Catherine McLay, "The Divided Self: Theme and Pattern in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*," *Journal of Canadian Fiction* 4:1 (1975) 82-95; reprinted in *The Canadian Novel: Here and Now*, ed. John Moss (Toronto: N.C. Press, 1978) 32-44.
16. Susan Wood Glicksohn, "The Martian Point of View," *Extrapolation* 15:2 (May 1974) 161-73; Susan Fromberg Schaeffer, "It Is Time That Separates Us," *Centennial Review* 18 (Fall 1974) 319-37; Karen F. Stein, "Reflections in a Jagged Mirror: Some Metaphors of Madness," *Aphra* 6:2 (Spring 1975) 2-11; and Cathy N. Davidson, "Chopin and Atwood:

Woman Drowning, Woman Surfacing," *Kate Chopin Newsletter* 1:3 (Winter 1975) 6-10.

17. Frank Davey, *From There to Here: A Guide to Our English Literature Since 1960*, Our Nature — Our Voices, vol. 2. (Erin, Ont.: Press Porcepic, 1974) 30-6.
18. George Galt, "*Surfacing* and the Critics," *Canadian Forum* 54 (May-June 1974) 12-14; I(an) D(rummond), "Fairy Tales of Canada: II, The Lady of the Lake: Or How the Octopus Got Its Tentacles," appeared on pages 68-9 of that issue. For Onley 1974 and Ross 1974, see note 15; Linda Rogers, "Margaret the Magician," *Canadian Literature* 60 (Spring 1974) 83-5.
19. See note 3.
20. Scott Lauder, "We Are Not So Happy," *Canadian Forum* 54 (November-December 1974) 17-18; Alan Pearson, "A Skeletal Novella in Plain Diction. A Bestiary under Iron Grey Skies," *Globe and Mail* 28 September 1974, 33; and George Amabile, "Consciousness in Ambush," *CV/II* 1:1 (Spring 1975) 5-6, quoted 6.
21. Tom Marshall, "Five Poets from Five Countries," *Ontario Review* 2 (Spring-Summer 1975) 86-8, quoted 88; Ken Norris, "Survival in the Writings of Margaret Atwood," *Cross Country* 1 (Winter 1975) 19-29, quoted 19; Christopher Levenson, review of *You Are Happy*, *Queen's Quarterly* 82 (Summer 1975) 297-8; and Andrew Scott, "The Poet as Sorceress," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 3 (Fall 1975) 60-2.
22. Gary Geddes, "Now You See It ... Now You Don't: An Appreciation of Atwood and MacEwen, Two Grand Illusionists," *Books in Canada* 5:7 (July 1976) 4-6; Linda Sandler, "The Exorcisms of Atwood," *Saturday Night* 91:5 (July-August 1976) 59-60; J. R. (Tim) Struthers, "Margaret Atwood Has Surfaced: The Fist Is Now a Hand," *London (Ontario) Free Press*, 22 January 1977, p. 31; and Linda Rogers, "Dirges to Baby," *Sphinx* 2:3 (Winter 1977) 78-80, quoted 78, 79. The U.S. reviews of *You Are Happy* and *Selected Poems* were more varied, ranging from feminist celebrations and thematic appreciations, to struggles with unfamiliar Canadian themes, pain, or cold; see especially Carolyn Forche's 1978 review of *Selected Poems*, *New York Times Book Review*, 21 May 1978, 15, 42, which found madness and the wilderness disturbingly romanticized.
23. Marian Engel, "She Who Laughs Last...," *Tamarack Review* 69 (Summer 1976) 94-6; Patricia Morley, "The Gothic as Social Realism," *Canadian Forum*, December-January 1977, 49-50; and Wilfred Cude, "The Truth Was Not Convincing," *Fiddlehead*, 112 (Winter 1977) 133-7; reprinted, lightly revised, as "Bravo Mothball! An Essay on *Lady Oracle*," in *The Canadian Novel*, ed. John Moss, 1978, 45-50; and as "Nobody Dunit: The Loose End as Structural Element in *Lady Oracle*," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15:1 (Spring 1980) 30-44.
24. Brian Vintcent, "An Edible Woman with More Bite," *Quill and Quire* 42:11 (September 1976) 6; and I. M. Owen, "Queen of the Maze!", *Books in Canada* 5 (September 1976) 3-5, quoted 5.
25. Roberta Rubenstein, "*Surfacing*: Margaret Atwood's Journey to the Interior," *Modern Fiction Studies* 22:3 (Autumn 1976) 387-99; Josie P. Campbell, "The Woman as Hero in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*," *Mosaic* 11:3 (Spring 1978) 17-28; reprinted in *CEMA*, 168-79; and Russell M. Brown, "Atwood's Sacred Wells," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 17 (Spring 1980) 5-43; reprinted, abridged, in *CEMA*, 213-29.
26. Carol P. Christ, "Margaret Atwood: The Surfacing of Women's Spiritual Quest and Vision," *Signs* 2:2 (Winter 1976) 316-30; reprinted, lightly revised, as "Refusing to Be Victim," in Carol P. Christ, *Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on Spiritual Quest* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980) 41-53. Marge Piercy 1973, cited in note 9; Judith Plaskow, "On Carol Christ on Margaret Atwood: Some Theological Reflections," *Signs* 2:2 (Winter 1976) 331-9; and Francine du Plessix Gray, "Nature as the Nunnery," *New York Times Book Review*, 17 July 1977, pp. 3, 29; reprinted in *CEMA*, 131-4.
27. Barbara Hill Rigney, *Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel: Studies in Bronte, Woolf, Lessing, and Atwood* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978) 91-127; Peter

Slater, *Dynamics of Religion: Meaning and Change in Religious Traditions* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978) 113-33, 147-9; and William James, "Atwood's 'Surfacing'," *Canadian Literature* 91 (Winter 1981) 174-81.

28. In the *Malahat Review: Margaret Atwood: A Symposium*, edited by Linda Sandler, 41 (January 1977): Eli Mandel, "Atwood Gothic," 165-74, quoted 174; reprinted in *Another Time* (Erin, Ontario: Press Porcepic, 1977) 137-45; and in *CEMA*, 114-23. Also in the *Malahat: Atwood*: Tom Marshall, "Atwood under and above water," 89-94, quoted 90, 94; revised in *Harsh and Lovely Land: The Major Canadian Poets and the Making of a Canadian Tradition* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1979) 154-60.
29. Jane Lilienfeld, "Circe's Emergence: Transforming Traditional Love in Margaret Atwood's *You Are Happy*," *Worcester Review* (Massachusetts) 5 (March 1977) 29-37; reprinted in *CEMA*, 123-30; and Carolyn Allen, "Power of Transformation," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 6 (Spring 1977) 5-17. Jean Mallinson (1978) is cited in note 3; Frank Davey (1973-74), in notes 12 and 17; and George Amabile (1975), in note 20. Valerie Trueblood, "Conscience and Spirit," *American Poetry Review* 6:2 (March-April 1977) 19-20; Judith McCombs, "Atwood's Nature Concepts," *Waves* 7:1 (Fall 1978) 68-77; and Susan J. Rosowski, "Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle:* Fantasy and the Modern Gothic Novel," paper read at the Midwest Modern Language Association Convention, Minneapolis, 3 November 1978; reprinted in *CEMA*, 197-208; a slightly altered version, subtitled "Social Mythology and the Gothic Novel," was published earlier, in *Research Studies*, Washington State University Press, 49:2 (June 1981) 87-98.
30. Rosemary Sullivan, "Breaking the Circle," *Malahat: Atwood* 1977, 30-41; reprinted in *CEMA*, 104-14; and Frank Davey, "Atwood's Gorgon Touch," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 2:2 (Summer 1977) 146-63; reprinted in *Surviving the Paraphrase: Eleven Essays on Canadian Literature* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1983) 87-111; and in *CEMA*, 134-53.
31. John Wilson Foster, "The Poetry of Margaret Atwood," *Canadian Literature* 74 (Autumn 1977) 5-20, quoted 5, 17; reprinted in *CEMA* 153-67; and T. D. MacLulich, "Atwood's Adult Fairy Tale: Levi-Strauss, Bettelheim, and *The Edible Woman*," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 11 (Summer 1978) 111-29; quoted 111; reprinted in *CEMA*, 179-97.
32. Sherrill Grace, *Violent Duality: A Study of Margaret Atwood* (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1980) 1-3, 86, 106. Robin Mathews is cited in note 11; Frank Davey, "Atwood's Gorgon Touch," in note 30. Frank Davey, "*Lady Oracle*'s Secret: Atwood's Comic Novels," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 5:2 (Fall 1980) 209-21; reprinted in *Surviving the Paraphrase* 1983, note 30, 151-66.
33. In *The Art of Margaret Atwood: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Arnold E. Davidson and Cathy N. Davidson, (Toronto: Anansi, 1981): Sandra Djwa, "The Where of Here: Margaret Atwood and a Canadian Tradition," 15-34; Judith McCombs, "Atwood's Haunted Sequences: *The Circle Game, The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, and *Power Politics*," 35-54; Catherine McLay, "The Dark Voyage: *The Edible Woman* as Romance," 123-38; and Annis Pratt, "*Surfacing* and the Rebirth Journey," 139-57; also Annis Pratt with Barbara White, Andrea Loewenstein, and Mary Myer, *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981) 135-66, especially 157-61. Also in *Art* 1981: Robert Lecker, "Janus through the Looking Glass: Atwood's First Three Novels," 177-203; and Clara Thomas, "*Lady Oracle*: The Narrative of a Fool-Heroine," 159-75.
34. Grace, *Violent Duality*, note 32, p. 135.
35. Douglas Barbour, review of *Two-Headed Poems*, *Fiddlehead* 121 (Spring 1979) 139-42, quoted 139; reprinted in *CEMA*, 208-12; and Lorna Irvine, "One Woman Leads to Another," in *Art* (1981) 95-106, quoted 95.
36. Ann Mandel, review of *True Stories* and *Wilson's Bowl*, by Phyllis Webb, *Fiddlehead* 131 (January 1982) 63-70; reprinted, abridged, in *CEMA*, 245-51.
37. In *Margaret Atwood: Language, Text, and System*, ed. Sherrill E. Grace and Lorraine Weir

(Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983): Sherrill E. Grace, "Articulating the 'Space Between': Atwood's Untold Stories and Fresh Beginnings," 1-16; Lorraine Weir, "Atwood in a Landscape," 143-53; Barbara Blakeley, "The Pronunciation of Flesh: A Feminist Reading of Atwood's Poetry," 33-51; Eli Mandel, "Atwood's Poetic Politics," 53-66; and George Woodcock, "Metamorphosis and Survival: Notes on the Recent Poetry of Margaret Atwood," 125-42; see note 40 for Woodcock's 1987 revised reprint.

38. Jerome H. Rosenberg, *Margaret Atwood*, Twayne's World Authors Series, Canadian Literature, ed. Robert Lecker, no. 740 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, G. K. Hall & Co., 1984) 50, 73, quoted 50; David Helwig (1969), cited in note 2; and Frank Davey, *Margaret Atwood: A Feminist Poetics*, New Canadian Criticism Series (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1984) 43-8, 162-3, quoted 162-3.
39. Jean Mallinson, "Margaret Atwood," in *Canadian Writers and Their Works*, Poetry Series, Volume Nine, ed. Robert Lecker, Jack David, and Ellen Quigley, introduced by George Woodcock (Toronto: ECW Press, 1985) 17-81; Estella Lauter, *Women as Mythmakers: Poetry and Visual Art in Twentieth-Century Women* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) 62-78, 192-4; Alicia Ostriker, *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986) 14963; and Annis Pratt, "Medusa in Canada," *Centennial Review* 31:1 (Winter 1987) 1-32.
40. Ronald B. Hatch, "Towards Transcendence: The Poetry of Judith Fitzgerald, Margaret Atwood, and Ted Hughes," *West Coast Review* 19:4 (April 1985) 47, 50-5; Anne Blott, "Journey to Light," *Fiddlehead* 146 (Winter 1986) 90-5; reprinted in *CEMA*, 275-9; and George Woodcock, "Metamorphosis and Survival: Notes on the Recent Poetry of Margaret Atwood," in *Northern Spring: The Flowering of Canadian Literature* (Vancouver, Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1987) 266-84.
41. George Woodcock, "Victor — or Victim," *Canadian Literature* 86 (Autumn 1980) 136-8, quoted 138; and Sherrill Grace, *Violent Duality*, 135-8.
42. Cathy N. Davidson and Arnold E. Davidson, "Prospects and Retrospect in *Life Before Man*," in *Ari* 1981, 205-21; Linda Hutcheon, "From Poetic to Narrative Structures: the Novels of Margaret Atwood," in *Language* 1983, 17-31; Ildikó de Papp Carrington, "Demons, Doubles, and Dinosaurs: *Life Before Man*, *The Origin of Consciousness*, and 'The Icicle'," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 33 (Fall 1986) 68-88; reprinted in *CEMA*, 229-45; and Catherine McLay, "Triple Solitaire," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, nos. 35-36 (1986) 122-9.
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44. Jerome H. Rosenberg, *Margaret Atwood*, 125-33; and Frank Davey, *Margaret Atwood: A Feminist Poetics*, 78-9, 119, quoted 79.
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I.S. MacLaren

Defusing the Canon: Against the Classicization of Canadian Literature

Au Canada anglais, les études littéraires ont mis l'accent sur des canons littéraires restreint aux «belles lettres» (romans et poésie). Pourtant, certaines des oeuvres les plus remarquables de la littérature canadienne appartiennent à d'autres genres littéraires, comme par exemple les essais et les récits de voyages d'exploration. En fait, on a suivi trop longtemps des modèles britanniques pour établir les canons littéraires canadiens, au lieu de chercher a évaluer la littérature canadienne selon des modèles reflétant les réalités particulières du Canada.

In 1967, we like to think, Canada came together of its own volition to celebrate ourself. Only postwar parades had produced occasions of such scale in the past, and those, despite William Lyon Mackenzie King's fudging on conscription, could hardly be regarded as prompted by volition alone. When Canadian literature subsequently evolved from a sporadic into a permanent possibility in a university undergraduate's education in this country — I say *possibility*, because it remains only that, and will do until the last wave of the imported British and American academic generations has loosened its grip on Departments of English — the intellectual celebration of ourself occurred with the mounting, loading, and firing of a canon. Oddly, the resources out of which this canon was fashioned were not ours; nor, I suggest in this position paper, were they particularly apposite for the occasion at hand. Suddenly charged with the responsibility to produce Canadian literature courses, our academic community reverted to essentially English criteria for selection. Whether Ward and Waller's *Cambridge History of English Literature* or the then pervasive modernist influence of F.R. Leavis was the stronger of the criteria might well prove worth ascertaining,

but certain it is that the combination of the two immediately determined what would and would not constitute the canon of Canadian literature. I have no particular quarrel with a Leavisite notion of canonicity, none *per se*; however, I do wish to quarrel with the notion of its suitability as an imported literary-critical strategy, one less notorious than the fabled British resolve to deploy rank and file troops in North American forests, but a strategy deserving of scrutiny nonetheless. Consciously or unconsciously, this imported strategy was deployed in such anthological campaigns as Klinck and Watters' *Canadian Anthology*, and in such editorial projects as McClelland and Stewart's *New Canadian Library*. I take this preamble as a given. What I wish to ask you to consider is whether or not we serve our literary identity well by continuing, two decades later, almost exclusively to read, study, and teach Canadian novels, poems, and, occasionally, plays. In particular, what effect has this habit had on our evaluation of premodernist Canadian literature? Consider, for example, the wide gap that confronts the newcomer to Canadian literature who reads these anthological and publication series' selections on the one hand, and the much more diffuse portrait of Canadian literature presented in any of the editions of the *Literary History of Canada* on the other. Why this gap between the literary production of a colony cum nation and the appreciation and study among most of us of only a couple of genres worth of it?

First, some facts. By the time of our centennial, McClelland and Stewart's *New Canadian Library*, under the general editorship of Malcolm Ross, had released sixty-one titles, the sixty-first in fact being the notoriously wretched abridgement of *Wacousta*. Of those publications, made available at reasonable prices for classroom use, only four could be classified as neither fiction nor poetry: a severely cut version of Jameson's *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles*, Tiger Dunlop's *Upper Canada*, Traill's *The Backwoods of Canada*, and Grainger's *Woodsmen of the West*. As well, of the remaining fifty-seven titles, one book of poetry by a single poet had appeared — William Drummond's insouciant *Habitant Poems* — and there had been three brief anthologies of poetry, *Poets of the Confederation*, *Poets Between the Wars*, and *Poetry of Mid-Century*. There were no plays, and while there were a remarkable seven books of essays, they are all (unless one wishes to argue for the addition to them of *Roughing It In the Bush*) by a single author: Stephen Leacock. There are several volumes of short stories. Notably, however, forty-three of the sixty-one titles (or seventy percent) are novels, as many as four by a single author — Grove and Gabrielle Roy. For better or worse, the *New Canadian Library* situated fiction, and principally the novel, at the forefront of Canadian literary studies. The series continues to do so, fiction representing 78 percent of all titles, including the poetry series, published up to 1985.

It would seem that when Canadian literary studies were widely formulated in the rush of centennial exuberance — as little as three weeks' notice was often all that a professor was given before finding himself/herself

in front of a CanLit class, I am told — the literary art form of the day was uncritically privileged. Now, that privileging has probably determined the genre in which many of our literary artists write: we all know that our criticism has sought the great Canadian novel in earnest; we all know that criticism — think of Atwood's *Survival* — has defined national identity largely in terms of our novels; we all know that a writer sells best if his works are taught in the universities, and that entrance into academic CanLit most often comes by way of a novel, though Tremblay, Munro, Layton, and Purdy prove that a novel is hardly mandatory.

Especially victimized by this privileging of *the* contemporary art form have been non-belletristic writings. I want to consider this fact, together with the mistake we make in thinking that our literature came of age only when we started writing novels well. Thanks to critics like Woodcock and Frye, modernists through and through, although hardly Leavisites, Canadian literary studies have always, not just neglected but actually, obscured Canadian literature's non-belletristic roots. While the *Literary History of Canada* made a concerted effort to canvass all writing in all periods, the portrait of Canadian literature that it presents remains foreign to most Canadian students. Why should it? Permit me to consider two cases briefly.

The first comes from exploration literature — my own bailiwick — but from a novelist's view of it. The text in question is John Franklin's *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea*, published in 1823 as that explorer's account of an overland expedition from Hudson Bay to the Arctic Ocean. This expedition encountered adventure, disappointment, danger (principally in paddling birch-bark canoes through ocean swells and ice floes along a coast where no wood could have been found to repair them), starvation, cannibalism, rescue at the eleventh hour by the unsung Amerindian tribe long since extinct, and an apparent Lazarus-like return from the dead. Now, while the *Literary History of Canada* provides an entire chapter on exploration literature in English, it has never garnered any notice. Perhaps a remark by Frederick Philip Grove, recently published by my colleague, Paul Hjartarson, will shame us into paying Franklin's narrative some attention. Between criticisms that A.E. Housman misses the high aim of poetry and that Fielding's *Tom Jones* is essentially "a silly book," sits in his "Thoughts and Reflections" a remark that implies much about Grove's own notion of the heroic character: Grove judges Franklin's narrative "an elemental book of very high rank — an old favourite of mine. It has all the earmarks of great art and is yet an almost literal transcript of actual experience."[1] Roundabout the time of the Canadian Centennial, in introducing his own anthology of early prose writing, A.J.M. Smith provided the trenchant observation of "a general failure to recognize that the historical development of Canada 'from colony to nation' has imposed an individuality upon Canadian literature that is missed if one limits it to *belles lettres*."[2] That Smith's remark is accurate, I happen to agree; far more significant than my agreement, however, remains the fact that Smith's

assertion has not been tested by those of us who blithely plod on teaching novel after novel, varying the diet only with other *belles lettres*, short stories and poems. The modernist formulation of our canon has, I maintain, so truncated our literary studies as to deny many of the genres that defined nineteenth-century, and, if we may judge from Grove's remark, even twentieth-century Canadian literature. Instead of wondering why we leave fur-trade narratives to the historians of Canada, we content ourselves with *belles lettres*, content ourselves unthinkingly. Pelham Edgar was the first such modernist critic, who, in the midst of a literary history, *The Cambridge History* in fact, that treats all kinds of writing and not just *belles lettres*, took it upon himself to dismiss any Canadian writer who did not write "pure literature" (344); Edgar then goes on to apologize that "with us, literature is compelled to be almost completely artifice";[3] and concludes his introductory remarks by intimating that Canada will eventually come of age by writing novels:

> ... it is still necessary to account for the dearth of native novels in a novel-reading country. In partial explanation, it may be urged that, even if frivolous in intention, a novel is still a serious undertaking, and is rarely entered upon by a sheer amateur. Now, by reason of the conditions of life in Canada, and in view of the fierce competition to which a Canadian novelist would be subjected, we have not yet developed a professional literary class, and our great novels still lie ahead of us.[4]

I leave it to you to surmise who might be meant by the term "sheer amateur," and will point out instead what is probably clear enough already: Canada will become, suggests Edgar, a literary power to be reckoned with once it starts producing "great novels." This view, expressed in the closing volume of the *History* in 1916, is the view propagated by George Woodcock and later, by influential critics. In Edgar's case, it permits in the subsequent essay a privileging of *belles lettres* alone: Haliburton, Crawford, Lampman, Drummond (perhaps the reason for his inclusion in the *New Canadian Library)*, followed by the "Lesser Poets." Then comes a list of the literature of exploration, travel, and settlement, which Edgar appends without judgement as a sort of subspecies, unworthy of serious study but nevertheless "a very enjoyable part of Canadian literature." With a summary of historical fiction, which Edgar observes is "momentarily, out of fashion,"[5] he completes his history with the hierarchical ordering of genres firmly placed. I suggest that they have never been questioned, only followed: other genres might divert us, but *belles lettres* alone will engage the serious reader.

But now, in an age when literature's very theoretical studies call for the scrutiny and revaluation of discourse regardless of its generical setting, we

must not remain confined by the sights of a myopic canon to the discourses of *belles lettres*. We must endeavour to uncover the roots of our literature in travel, exploration, the periodical essay and sketch, in political rhetoric, sermons, kitchen histories, and ethnic writing. In contemporary literature, we will lose sight of even our novelists if we do not undertake this more diffuse/defused study: Grove, MacLennan, Bowering, van Herk, Kroetsch have all, for example, worked diligently on exploration literature in order to write *belles lettres*. But many of us who teach Canadian literature do not respond to this fact with any alacrity. Perhaps too few of us also recognize that perambulation at least, if not travel, is what the protagonists of many of our novels are often doing. To a reader of travel literature, this comes as no revelation. Ought we not to note perhaps that in modernism's notion of canonicity — which genres gain admission, which do not — Canadian literature may not have been well served? By all means, let us attempt to establish a canon; as evaluation seems to me a necessary and unavoidable and even desirable concomitant of research and criticism, I see no good served by suggesting that defusing a canon/making a canon more diffuse is a project that could reasonably expect to avoid evaluation. But the campaign to refashion the canon would have the virtue of curing the myopia with which we currently too often read and teach Canadian literature. Not just a belletristic canon, then, one that gives rise to such embarrassing valuations as the one that always made Margaret Laurence cringe — that *The Stone Angel* was/is the first great work of Canadian literature. *The Stone Angel* is a great novel, by any standards of evaluation, but I regret to disprize those who continue to think as much: it was not the first anything.

Frances Brooke's is a wonderfully enlightening first North American novel. We read it because it is belletristic, because it came first, and also, I suspect, because Brooke was on speaking terms with Samuel Johnson. But why, equally, not read that "most flagrant mixture of fact and fiction,"[6] Baron Lahontan's *Nouveaux Voyages* (1703), whose interesting use of dialogue as the narrative form for the presentation of White-Amerindian relations in a spirited discourse helped to establish Jean Jacques Rousseau's notion of the noble savage? Or Thomas James's *Strange and Dangerous Voyage*, which records a winter spent in James Bay? It is known that this narrative inspired both Milton and Coleridge's poetry. Why do we ignore its fascinating record of European encounters with what is now Canada?

Any such list could go on, but I wish here only to advertise against the feebleness that our canon will falter into if it continues to be foddered only by *belles lettres*. Many of us who work in early Canadian literature delight in the variety of discourses that it possesses and that modern writing does not. This century has not shown such variety since 1967 because publishers, in collaboration with academics and writers, know that novels not exceeding 250 pages (this was the McClelland and Stewart guideline by which the abridgement of *Wacousta* was made) stand a better chance than any other writing of entering the classroom at the moment. And this critical

view, however conscious, determines what nineteenth-century work passes muster too: even the *Centre for the Editing of Early Canadian Texts* remains steadfastly committed to the editing and reissuing only of *belles lettres*. This policy I see as no more than a business decision; in no critically defensible sense except a market-oriented canonicity, is such a policy defensible.

In moving to the second case, I move to the modern period itself to suggest that canonicity has had the effect of making an exceptionally fine essayist into an inordinately frequently read novelist of the second rank. I speak here of Hugh MacLennan, whose *Cross-Country* (1949), *Seven Rivers of Canada* (1961), and *The Other Side of Hugh MacLennan* (1978) rarely turned up as classroom texts. Douglas Spettigue asserts that the essays share a focus possessed by the novels in so far as they "champion civilized values in a philistine world,"[7] but the non-belletristic essays provide another dimension that the novels do not, for they are not tortuously concerned with the mimesis of realism in fiction. Let me suggest that the second volume, *Seven Rivers of Canada*, the only one of the three in print now, can suitably commence any course, graduate or undergraduate, in either Canadian literature or Canadian history. Historically, these essays are accurate, economical, pertinent; literarily, they offer intrigue on two counts: they present a regionalist persona who dramatizes the *angst* he feels when in other river valleys in Canada than that of his own childhood, when, for instance, he is on the Fraser instead of his comfortable, slow, settled St. John River; as well, the essays use paradox structurally as a mimesis of the view that the essential relation between the White and the land in Canada is ironical. These essays are dated, just as any realist novel now is, but they show a personal survey based on a diligent reading of writing in Canada, a healthy variety of it, incidentally, not just *belles lettres*; thus, they evince as well a willingness to see the entire country before passing judgement on it in terms of the novel's portrait of it.

What risks do we run by not defusing/diffusing our canon? Apart from myopia, we risk downright ignorance. Will we know better when a critic who knows as little about Canada as Northrop Frye tells us that our earliest literature has no more literary intent than does a mating loon?[8] That we bought this twaddle for too long, that we allowed Atwood's *Survival*, itself based upon a reading almost exclusively of *belles lettres*, to gain prominence in the teaching of Canadian literature, that our most prominent *academic* press, University of Toronto Press, thought it important to pass this nonsense before us again in the execrable form of Gaile McGregor's shameless *Wacousta Syndrome* — these all signify to me that if we continue to provide only *belles lettres* as the fodder for our canon we will find that canon turned on ourselves. Perhaps we have already seen this happen, in so far as Frye has recently told us that "despite [his] years as a boy scout [he hasn't] much of a notion about what to do with nature."[9]

If we are just now discovering that Canadians perhaps make better documentary than feature films, ought we not to study whether we write

some genres better than others? Have we ever questioned whether the novel suits us? In whose eyes do we fail to succeed in passing muster if we determine that we write essays, say, or memoirs or biographies very well indeed? Our literature, at least until academia began determining its course, has always made a varied, perhaps even eclectic, choice of media for its expression. Let us begin to celebrate that eclectic, detached, diffuse character, and forego conformity to a notion of canon developed elsewhere for a single time and place. We've been firing off the same old canon now for too long.

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Notes

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3. Pelham Edgar, "English-Canadian Literature," *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, ed. by A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller, 15 vols. (Cambridge: CUP, 1916) 14: 344.
4. Ibid., 345
5. Loc. cit.
6. Jack Warwick, "New France, Writing in:," *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, ed. by William Toye (Toronto: O.U.P., 1983) 555.
7. D.O. Spettigue, "MacLennan, Hugh," *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, 492.
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August J. Fry

Periods, canons and who wants to get into *The New Yorker* anyway?

Après une brève discussion sur la notion de périodes historiques dans la production des oeuvres littéraires, l'auteur traite de la notion de canons littéraires. Il estime que cette notion, qui trouve ses origines dans l'histoire des religions juives et chrétiennes, n'est d'aucune utilité à la critique littéraire puisqu'elle se réfère a un corpus fixe de textes essentiels. Pour l'auteur, il serait impossible d'établir ce corpus puisque l'appréciation des oeuvres littéraires se transforme, et s'est transformée, à travers l'histoire.

Canadian books may occasionally have had a mild impact outside Canada; Canadian literature has had none.[1]

> ... by its very nature Canadian literature is not — and may never be — an autonomous discourse.[2]

In the study of literatures in English it appears to me that the question of *periodization* is closely bound to that of *canonicity*. As a consequence, I propose to discuss periods in English literature, first in order to establish the proper framework in which to determine the relative merit and importance of various texts. Some attitudes toward one's national literature may lead to isolationism; others toward immediate literary suicide. In this context the similar history of American literature, i.e. similar to that of Canada, is not without relevance, for there is a distinct difference between Matthew Arnold praising William Cullen Bryant and Walt Whitman raucously praising himself. And perhaps there is, as I have come to believe, no *final* and acceptable view of canon, simply the endless critical hedging which the English with great honesty call, muddling through.

I.

There is, according to Robert Frost, something about a wall which keeps neighbours good neighbours. And the notion of silently mending a stone fence has a kind of metaphorical attractiveness about it which I am tempted to force upon the study of literature. I am withheld from doing so, not so much by native good sense in such matters, as by a radical hitch in the possible application of such a notion to the history of English literature in which the whole idea of *period* seems so terribly arbitrary. And there is nothing, after all, more dangerous than the application of an appealing, though idiosyncratic, metaphor. Nothing can do greater damage to clear thinking.

Periodization in the study of English literature then, expresses a charming lack of principle, confusing as it does, monarchs and contents in a remarkable jumble of terms. Elizabethan and Restoration, Jacobean and Romantic, present four of the confusing possibilities available to the student. And in recent years the use of modern, postmodern, post-postmodern and contemporary add to the list a note of hilarity one would rather not miss. More seriously, however, this confusion of terminology should indicate how profound is our lack of principle in defining and structuring our literary past. In fact, when we look at the nomenclature of our study it is apparent that we have, as students of English literature, no very clear idea of how we want to give form to our past, nor do we take those forms with any great seriousness, given the way we spring about with the terminology.

Within the study of English literature, or British for my North American listeners, this nonchalance is all very well and good; it is when we turn to American and then Commonwealth literatures that periodization has an effect which is far from salutary. There has been, from the nineteenth century onward, a tendency by the English to compare literatures in terms of some vague sort of cultural *progress*, which allows one to take the lack of a Romantic period in the United States to indicate that the literary productions of the young nation had not yet *caught up* with those of the rejected mother country. It is only with Henry James, an expatriate after all, that American literature may be said to have pulled alongside that of Great Britain. Matters are in complete synchronization, then, when T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound arrive in London to take on the leadership of the modern movement, and from that point on, the two literatures appear to walk in a kind of lock-step into the present.

A similar view has been taken with regard to Canadian literature. Until well after the Second World War it is possible to see the Canadian sensibility as lagging behind the two pace setters, England and the United States. Some time in the fifties Canadians appear to catch up and join the marching throng of literature in English. Morley Callaghan and Irving Layton, Frederick P. Grove and Dorothy Livesay do, after all, appear to be

running after the bandwagon (if there is such a thing), while Sheila Watson, bp nichol, Dennis Lee, Rudy Wiebe and Matt Cohen, to be very arbitrary in my choice of writers once again, seem to be part and parcel of the concerns which we take to be contemporary with those of Britain and the U.S.; that is, with Salman Rushdie, Martin Amis, John Ashbery and Thomas Pynchon for example. For what it's worth, Canadian literature would appear to have become a contemporary part of literature in English sometime in the past thirty years, and now may be judged directly without the threat of Dr Johnson's dog in the critical manger.

Having confirmed that the Canadian literature is now very much a part of literature in English in general, we are free to describe it in our customary terminology. And although that was the problem with which we began, unless our study is to remain outside the mainstream of literature in English altogether, an attempt must be made to present Canadian literature in the usual metered categories.

It has become customary to speak of a modern as well as a postmodern period, and if we define the former in terms of time, we usually say that it extended from 1910 to 1950 while reserving the next thirty years or so for the postmodern. (The problem of whether or not the postmodern period is over I shall not consider here.) Moving beyond the generally agreed upon periodization just indicated, there have also been attempts made to define these periods in terms of their distinctive content. The modern period is one of continuing realism in a world filled with violence, moral uncertainty and religious doubt. It is one in which man turned inward to discover the significance of his existence as well as the structures of the ills which beset him. It is also the period in which he turned back to the crucial stories which gave form to his life; the myths which came from his history, from his psyche, or from both, to create the value structures of his living. In all of this he relied upon language and kept to the belief that language was about something more than itself.[3]

The mentality of the postmodern period, however, casts doubt upon the time just before and especially upon some of modernism's most cherished presuppositions. Not only has myth lost its explanatory role, the very power to explain and the need to do so have been thrown into the shadows. Man, it would appear, is caught up in his own sign systems, and these systems reflect the categories of his thinking, rather than any of the possible structures of the world about him. He is no longer cast adrift in a hostile world as some thought fifty years ago, he is adrift in the solipsisms of mind and language. There is no sheet anchor for his passions, no bench mark for his progress. (The play of metaphors was consciously chosen.) And most serious of all, language has become its own incestuous structure, breeding not lilacs but the wishes of its own furies. We are lost to indeterminacy then, as much by a metaphor misplaced from physics as by our own declared uncertainty.[4]

In the Canadian context, Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*[5] is often taken as the first truly modern novel and it is significant that it appeared as late as 1959. Without going into the reasons for this assertion here, if that is the case, the spring into the postmodern period cannot be far behind. Indeed, it will just be a matter of a few years. The literary history of the twentieth century will be compressed into three decades or so, and it will be possible to describe our recent past within very small compass. If we take as a possible postmodern text *Surfacing* (1972)[6] by Margaret Atwood, the time span will only be a matter of thirteen years. The question is, having finally caught up with what has been taken to be the mainstream, how are we to *pose* the question of canonicity in the light of this history?

II.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the current interest in *canonicity* is the ease with which critics have taken this term into their vocabulary. Not all that long ago, and most of us can remember the period vividly, we were content to talk about "reading lists" and to use the rhetorical question, "can an English major *not* have read such and such by the time he/she graduates?" Those lists, and the ever-recurring query, presupposed a bundle of approved texts which formed English literature, but it was a pretty loose and messy package, the sort of thing we received three weeks after Christmas from the U.S. Postal Service.

Now, on the contrary, our sense of the literature of the past seems to have changed. It is as though the centre, once loose and baggy, has become hard and firm, clearly defined. No longer do we have a sense of the common herd, milling and stirring, with the strays tagging along at the edges under the watchful eye of an out-rider like Leslie Fiedler who occasionally shouts, "hey, that's one of ours!" No, the ambience of the present usage suggests that something very specific has been agreed upon. And in some extreme instances we have even gone so far as to suggest that we get together and work out a canon, or even *the* canon.

This shift in the sense of the problem is significant, for to me at least, it would suggest that we have ceased to view the literature of the past historically, as though it were part of a process with all of the uncertainties such a condition affords, and have come to see it as an essence, a firm crystal of agreed quality and value which grows prism by prism along the string of consensus as immersed in the salt-solution of our culture. My images are perhaps, a bit far-fetched, but the facility with which the word *canonicity* enters a discussion now would suggest that the past is seen essentially rather than existenstially, and that something of the hurly-burly of the old literary free-for-all, which was the joyful state of criticism, has been lost. Canonicity has become a central concept in our literary grammar, it has ceased to gesture ostensively to our literature.

The word *canon*, however, is not natural to the study of English literature. It has been borrowed from organized religion and is now being employed metaphorically in a different context. As we all know, and to repeat myself slightly, nothing can be more dangerous to precise discourse than a hidden metaphor, some of the implications of which are "hostile" to the new situation in which it is being employed. One need only think of the word *fact* from the 17th century to the present day to appreciate the possible dangers. Metaphors, when they are unnoticed and hence un-analysed, can turn upon their new environment viciously. And so the first question in this context must surely be, what effect does this image have upon the study of English literature?

Canon in the Jewish faith or in the Christian church means a collection of received texts, the presence and acceptance of which are said to be essential to the believer for the purity of his faith and the security of his salvation. In all instances the list is closed and has been for some time, and no one now thinks of reopening the canon with a new candidate for inclusion. Texts not included have been long declared apocryphal, and necessary meetings and councils are no longer practically or ecclesiastically possible. The canon is closed; fixed and permanent.

In the past of course this was not the case. There was a time, almost two thousand years ago, when neither the Old nor the New Testaments were fixed, and the pressures of the times forced, for widely differing reasons, the need for canonized books upon the Jewish and Christian communities. In the case of the Jews, in the throes of the diaspora forced upon them by Imperial Roman policy, and especially in light of the destruction of the Second Temple, the need for an authoritative book was a matter of life or death as the believers spread across the face of the Empire. At Jamnia in 130 A.D., matters were settled and, with some lingering doubts about the Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes, the Old Testament canon was agreed upon.

The Church needed a fixed text of the New Testament for other, equally urgent reasons. As Christianity too spread through the Empire by virtue of its amazing missionary energies, a fixed collection of writings was necessary if the young faith were to survive its confrontations with the vast variety of religions and philosophies which were flourishing around the Mediterranean. The writings of Paul, Tertullian and Augustine reflect something of the spiritual confusion at the beginning of our era, and the tangled religious life of the latter reveals something of the energies the early Church felt called upon to resist. Over a period of years, and by means of a series of Councils, creed and canon were determined, though even here there remained uncertainty about the acceptability of some of the epistles and the book of the Revelations of St. John.

I have gone into the matter of *canon* at such length because I do not trust the implications of the metaphor for the study of literature, indeed I find it systematically misleading. There are few if any parallels between our attitudes toward our texts as students of literature and those of the believer,

Jewish or Christian, toward his. Our past is not fixed, nor does it need to be. Neither do our writings have the kind of authority required of religious books and, although critics sometimes treat Donne and Shakespeare as a Fundamentalist treats Genesis, their conclusions are not likely to bring them to a courtroom in Tennessee or cause a furor among the school-boards of the Middle West. Literary conclusions do not lead to conversion, the call to a new life, or the public disgrace of its television practitioners. We are less prominent and less powerful if not more modest in our opinions. Furthermore, religious books do not disappear from the canon with changes in critical taste, as Edmond Waller disappeared from our reading lists around the turn of this century. In fact, we continue to quarrel about our past in a way in which no religious person does if he wants to remain within his particular communion.

If the foregoing is a reasonable exegesis of the thrust of the metaphor of *canon*, certain conclusions, in the form of warnings, must follow, especially in the Canadian context;

1. there is no decision-making centre of authority among us such as council or pope, who has the power or the opportunity to decide upon the acceptability of literary work;
2. thus, there can be no final approved list or canon for English, American or Canadian literature;
3. we are condemned to agree upon Shakespeare, Melville and Grove, to have doubts about Fanny Burney, Charles Brockdon Brown and Mazo de la Roche and to fight, critically, about the rest.

Quite simply, *canon* is not an appropriate word for what we have in mind.

For Canadian literature, release from the demands of *canon* ought to be a liberation from the self-imposed demand that there be a defined list of accepted Canadian books. No young and vibrant literature should be burdened with the hidden requirement that it establish its own orthodoxy. The very urgency of such a demand can only frustrate the more creative members of the community by placing them under unnatural pressures. And critical discussions designed to create such a canon merely misdirect our attention by forcing upon us the subtle need to compare, evaluate and include/exclude when we should be carrying on elsewhere in the more important work of reading and analysing. *Canon* may describe a dead literature, it can only cripple a living one.[7]

III. Toward a conclusion

A little more than twenty years ago Northrop Frye claimed in his famous conclusion:

> The writers of the last decade (1965) at least, have begun to write in a world which is post-Canadian, as it is post-American, post-British, and post everything except the world itself. ... Sensibility is no longer dependent on a specific environment or even on sense experience itself.[8]

And he has been proven wrong. Rather than sink into some extensive postmodern pudding with Borges, Barthes, Grass and Marquez, never has the Canadian voice been more sharply Canadian than in the past twenty years. International recognition has not destroyed Canadian identity; on the contrary, that recognition appears to have made it more prominent. "Catching up," it would appear from part one, has given Canadian culture just the sort of self-confidence it needed in order to be itself. But is that so very surprising if we view the matter historically?

American writing was certainly secondary and derivative until well into the 19th century, and I am not sure that the so-called "renaissance" was not little more than a noisy transition which prepared the way for Henry James and T.S. Eliot. These two figures mark the end of any temporal difference between, or literary dependence upon, an English centre of culture by the United States, between the assertion that one is at the heart of things and the anxiety about being an insignificant outsider. After the turn of the century, literature in English came to be dominated by American and Irish writers, and London was no longer the hub of empire from which spokes extended to the ex-colonies and the Commonwealth. Paris, as a place of exile, had to be taken seriously, just as were New York and even Chicago for a while. The growing edge of sensibility of literature in English had left the seclusions of Bloomsbury for good. Indeed, the centre could not hold, and that was a very good thing indeed. The new sensibility was spreading throughout the English-speaking world, and there was no dominant place for the English in matters concerning the "modern mind."

In this light writers such as Callaghan and Grove, to take any two, were still just that literary half-step behind their contemporaries Fitzgerald and Dos Passos. Putting all detailed criticism of these two Canadian writers aside for a moment, we are still impressed by their being slightly old-fashioned for their time, as being echoes of what had gone on elsewhere less than a generation before, even though both of them had acceptable "modern" credentials. In this they were similar to William Cullen Bryant and Nathaniel Hawthorne a century earlier.

Between *The Double Hook* and *Surfacing*, however, we find a sea-change, if that is a viable image, in the self-confidence of the Canadian writer. Suddenly, this writing appears to be contemporaneous with all the rest; there appears, finally, to be an agreement of sensibility; the most Northern voice no longer sounds slightly off-beat as if in a transatlantic telephone call. The Canadian apprehension of Canada, rather than of

nowhere in particular, has become self justifying, and there is no charming quaintness to the voice.

If this is so, and I believe that it is manifestly the case, then there is no self-defensive need for a *canon* to preserve and protect the literature of the country. Just as writers no longer have to assert their Canadian identity in order to possess one, so too critics no longer need to employ the crutches of orthodoxy to confirm the object of their study. A loosely agreed upon list of books will arise naturally out of our conversations, and as we continue to talk, the better works of the past will be noted, registered and preserved. The *canon*, if we must use that word, will prove to be those books we repeatedly accept as being serious and, as our discussions press forward, we will come to separate, without having to decide self-consciously, the wheat from the chaff.

Finally, we need not fear too greatly the effects upon Canadian culture of the power to the South. As an American who has lived in Europe for some time, I have watched the "Americanisation" of that continent with some apprehension, and there is no doubt a close connection between the spread of a particular culture and the extent of a nation's global power. Nonetheless, no one in England is being coerced into eating American hamburgers, no one in Holland is being force-fed Coca-Cola. The danger which comes from the detail of American culture lies in the fact that it seems to be so attractive to so many people all over the world. In other words, most nations are doing it to themselves.

If there is a threat from the United States itself, it comes from the glib efficiency of its business practices, and the ease with which these techniques are applied over the whole world. Recent concentrations in publishing in Great Britain and the Netherlands are a greater threat to the literary cultures of these countries than any number of badly published books or sleazy television programmes. In fact, any structure, American or not, which limits the possible variety of cultural artifacts within a given society, is dangerous to the well-being of that particular culture. And in the case of Canada and the United States it is the almost incidental efficiency of the Americans with their cost-price orientation which will always be a singular threat to their smaller, more vulnerable northern neighbour. As though the giant shrugs.

Canon will not serve or protect Canadian literature, such a gesture of orthodox reaction will only produce results in a similar spirit. Self-confidence and the practical means of expression are all that one needs. That and the courage to be able to ask, who wants to be in *The New Yorker* anyway?

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Notes

1. David Staines, *E.K. Brown: Responses and Evaluations, Essays on Canada* (NCL, 1977) 4f.
2. Barry Cameron, "On the Edge: Situating Canadian Fiction," *The Literary Review* 28:3 (Spring 1985) 335.
3. Material for this paragraph may be found in Douwe Fokkema and Elrud Ibsch, *Het Modernisme in de Europese Letterkunde: Synthese, stromingen en aspecten* (1984) 9-49.
4. See Ihab Hassan, "Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective," *Critical Inquiry* 12:3 (Spring 1986) 503-20.
5. The selection of Ms Watson's novel for this position is based upon a conversation with Prof. David Staines at a recent conference on Canadian literature at the Free University, Amsterdam, May 8, 1987.
6. This, too, comes from that conversation with Mr. Staines. It is only fair to say that we agree upon this matter. It is also fair to say in this context that Mr. Staines eschews the use of the term *postmodern*.
7. Section two, for better or worse, is completely my own.
8. As collected in *The Bush Garden* (1971) 249.

Paul Hjartarson

The Literary Canon and its Discontent: Reflections on the Cultural Reproduction of Value

Le but de cette communication n'est pas d'établir un corpus de textes "classiques" de la littérature canadienne, ni de privilégier certains textes ou genres littéraires, mais plutôt d'examiner certaines notions (valeur littéraire, héritage culturel) qui sous-tendent le discours sur les "classiques". Ces notions sont plus précisément abordées à travers deux oeuvres littéraires, Badlands *de Robert Kroetsch et* A Handmaid's Tale *de Margaret Atwood, que l'auteur a décidé d'analyser.*

"Which are the classical writings for Canadianists?" To pose this question — one could term it a classical question for Canadianists — is to examine yet again the "canon", that is, the list of texts that shape our understanding of this country. We need, however, to be clear about one thing at the outset. The question is *not* whether a canon exists and, if not, whether we should formulate one. The canon *does* exist; we *have* already formulated it. We formulate it every day. The canonical texts are those that figure prominently in our own discourse — they are the texts we teach, we write about, we cite. The classical texts, in short, are those *we* value. The question "Which are the classical writings for Canadianists" is therefore necessarily self-reflective. It is a question directed to us, as Canadianists, about what *we* value; it is, essentially, a question about value itself. The operative phrase in the question "Which are the classical writings for Canadianists?" is therefore the modifier "*for Canadianists.*" That modifier both prescribes and assumes the community involved. It *prescribes* in that it directs the question to Canadianists about Canadian Studies. (Presumably

only Canadianists would be in a position to answer the question.) It *assumes* in that it posits an homogeneous community, "Canadianists," able to agree on the "classical writings."

If the "classical writings" are those that get taught, then the question demands that we reflect not only on the texts we have canonized but on the activity of canonization, of evaluation, itself. One view of this activity is provided by Walter Benjamin. "As in all previous history," Benjamin writes in "Theses on the Philosophy of History":

> whoever emerges as victor still participates in that triumph in which today's rulers march over the prostrate bodies of their victims. As is customary, the spoils are borne aloft in that triumphal parade. These are generally called the cultural heritage. The latter finds a rather distanced observer in the historical materialist. For such cultural riches, as he surveys them, everywhere betray an origin which he cannot but contemplate with horror. They owe their existence, not merely to the toil of the great creators who have produced them, but equally to the anonymous forced labor of the latter's contemporaries. There has never been a document of culture which was not at one and the same time a document of barbarism (258; cf. Jameson, 281).

"There has never been a document of culture which was not at one and the same time a document of barbarism." This is, as Frederic Jameson acknowledges in *The Political Unconscious*, "a hard saying" (281). It may seem an extreme view of the "classics"; it is certainly an unsettling view. My purpose in this paper is not to draw up a list of the classical Canadian literary texts, to privilege particular texts, particular genres; it is not to call into question or even simply to decry the need for a canon. I purpose instead to examine some of the issues implicit in Benjamin's view of cultural heritage; I shall argue that although Benjamin's view of cultural heritage is unsettling, it is far less extreme than it may first appear.

II

Benjamin's statement is unsettling, in part, because he views culture in relation to the will to power, because he understands aesthetic value as a function of other systems of value — economic, social, political. Both in aesthetic theory and in our day-to-day conversation we tend to separate aesthetic value from all other discourses of value, and to define works of art, "documents of culture," in terms of their supposedly essential qualities. This separation of aesthetic value from all other systems of value is, as Barbara

Herrnstein Smith argues in her essay, "Contingencies of Value," highly questionable. "All value," she argues,

> is radically contingent, being neither an inherent property of objects nor an arbitrary projection of subjects but, rather, the product of the dynamics of an economic system. It is readily granted, of course, that it is in relation to a system of that sort that commodities such as gold, bread, and paperback editions of *Moby Dick* acquire the value indicated by their market prices. It is traditional, however, both in economic and aesthetic as well as in informal discourse, to distinguish sharply between the value of an entity in that sense (that is, its "exchange-value") and some other type of value that may be referred to as its utility (or "use-value") or, especially with respect to so-called "non-utilitarian" objects such as artworks or works of literature, as its "intrinsic value." Thus, it might be said that whereas the fluctuating price of a particular paperback edition of *Moby Dick* is a function of such variables as supply and demand, production and distribution costs, and the publisher's calculation of corporate profits, these factors do not affect the value of *Moby Dick* as experienced by an individual reader or its intrinsic value as a work of literature. These distinctions, however, are not as clear-cut as may appear (11).

Indeed, Barbara Herrnstein Smith goes on to argue that literary and aesthetic values "acquire their force by virtue of various social and cultural practices and ... certain highly specialized and elaborated institutions," primary among them in this country, the universities. Literary and aesthetic values are, in short, something we, as members of such "highly specialized and elaborated institutions," produce.

Like Benjamin, Smith is concerned with the relation between aesthetic values and other systems of value. For her, as for Benjamin, value is never intrinsic. It is not inherent in things; it is not the creation of individuals. Value, for both, is contingent, the product of different discourses, different economic, social and political systems. "The labels 'art' and 'literature' are, of course," she notes,

> commonly signs of membership in distinctly honorific categories. The particular functions that may be endorsed by these labels, however, are ... neither narrowly confined nor readily specifiable but, on the contrary, exceptionally heterogeneous, mutable, elusive. To the extent — always limited, that the relation between these labels and a particular set of expected and desired functions is stabilized within a

> community, it is largely through the normative activities of various institutions: most significantly, the literary and aesthetic academy which, among other things, develops pedagogic and other acculturative mechanisms directed at maintaining at least (and commonly, at most) a *sub*-population of the community whose members "appreciate the value" of works of art and literature "as such." That is, by providing them with "necessary backgrounds," teaching them "appropriate skills," "cultivating their interests," and, generally, "developing their tastes," the academy produces generation after generation of subjects for whom the objects and texts thus labelled do indeed perform the functions thus privileged, thereby insuring the continuity of mutually defining canonical works, canonical functions, and canonical audiences (23).

Privileged functions. Privileged values. Privileged groups. It is thus not surprising that recent attempts to reevaluate the canon have come from those who feel themselves marginalized — less privileged — particularly those engaged in the study of the so-called "colonial literatures" and of "women's writing." I confess myself drawn to the view that all value, including aesthetic value, is radically contingent, and I find that view increasing explored in contemporary Canadian literature. A striking illustration of the contingency of value is to be found in the opening pages of Robert Kroetsch's novel, *Badlands*. That novel, you will remember, juxtaposes two narratives. The ostensible focus is Anna Dawe's narrative of her father, William Dawe's, expedition down the Red Deer River in 1916 in search of dinosaur bones; the focus, however, is Anna's own narrative offered in the form of a commentary on her father's quest. The passage I have in mind occurs in the opening pages of Anna's account of the 1916 expedition. The scene is Tail Creek, a tributary of the Red Deer River, where the four-man crew has beached its flatboat. While picking strawberries, Web, one of the members of the crew, discovers an Indian or Métis burial ground and, lying in a shallow, newly-dug grave, a young Indian woman. Alive. And, alarmed by his discovery, the expedition's first find, Web calls out to the expedition's commander William Dawe.

The scene that follows is in a section titled "*William Dawe in Command.*"

> William Dawe, hunchbacked, small, made smaller by a broad-brimmed black hat, moved stiffly off the open prairie and into the stand of poplars. If he saw the scattering of graves, of roofs, he did not let on; and yet he saved his shins from their grass-hid corners, marched in abrupt irritation through Web's strawberry patch and stopped at the base of the mound itself,

> stood combing his black beard with his fingers, watching while Web put out a hand in preparation to grasp and then lift up the apparition that he, Web, could not quite believe in.
>
> Dawe, watching, deciding.
>
> And the woman, also, the girl, watching, staring with luminous eyes at the tall man who bent over her, the hunchbacked man at his side; and they, not she, might have been apparitions, spirits at or even from the surrounding graves that were themselves fading back into prairie and bush.
>
> "Well stay there then," Web said. Willing to be dissuaded (6).

Ignoring Web, ignoring "the scattering of graves," ignoring the circumstances in which the woman lies, Dawe questions her: "'Can you tell us,' Dawe said, with condescending patience, 'where the bones are?'"(7). Standing in a graveyard, perhaps standing on bones, surely surrounded by them, he asks that preposterous and unanswerable question. "Can you tell us where the bones are?"

Prompted by her quizzical response, "what bones?", and joined now by the remainder of his crew, Dawe attempts to elaborate:

> And Dawe, his audience assembled: "the bones of the big reptiles." He would make it clear to these poor souls, the uninitiated, the ignorant, the vulgar: "The long bones—"
>
> And then even he, William Dawe, originator and financier and leader of the Dawe Expedition, was at a loss to explain his own compulsion to recover the past, his maniacal obsession: "Dinosaur—" He was about to risk his boat, his crew, his own life. "We are looking for the bones of the dead. We must find them."
>
> "You are going to the place of the dead?" the girl asked.
>
> William Dawe, not understanding her, as he refused to understand his wife, his friends, anyone who was not has equal in madness, answered, "Yes." Dawe whose whole existence was become a veritable and deliberate wager, a gamble, a bet that he could in one season find the rib or femur or skull that would insinuate to him, however grotesquely, the whole truth: the one gigantic and perfect skeleton of his dreams that would cast man forever out of everlasting vanity and conceit. And

> that for a profit too. With fame thrown in for a bonus.... Dawe agreed: "We are going to the place of the dead" (7-8).

The bones in that "Indian or Métis" graveyard — the narrative's inability to identify the graveyard is itself significant — have no meaning or value for William Dawe: he refuses to acknowledge *that* "place of the dead." The place he seeks, the fossils beds, and the obsession that drives him are a creation of his civilization and of the discourse of modern science. He cannot elaborate his question precisely because he is written by, he is a cipher for, the discourse of paleontology. (In Anna Dawe's narrative, he becomes a type, a specimen — *Daweosaurus magnicristus* — in "the western yarn those men were trying to tell each other" [45].) On the other hand, the bones Dawe so desperately seeks, the bones he and his society value, have no comparable meaning, for the Indian girl we come to know as Anna Yellowbird. Value is not inherent in the thing itself, in the bones; it is not something found but, like "the place of the dead," each seeks, something created. A contemporary "place of the dead," is the recently opened Tyrell Museum of Paleontology in Drumheller, which houses the "long bones" the fictional William Dawe seeks. Walking amidst those bones of the dead, viewing the spoils of that triumphal march, we might be tempted to see the truth in Walter Benjamin's assertion that "there has never been a document of culture which was not at one and the same time a document of barbarism."

III

Benjamin's assertion is unsettling, however, not only because he regards value as contingent but because he assumes that history, that societies, are characterized by struggle. A decade ago Jean-François Lyotard was commissioned by the *Conseil des Universités* of the Government of Quebec to report on the state of knowledge in the Western world. In the opening pages of his report, subsequently published in book form under the title *Le Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* — in English *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* — Lyotard discusses the methodological problems involved in such a study. One of these problems, the nature of the social bond, must be faced by anyone intent upon establishing the canon of Canadian writing, itself a form of knowledge. Lyotard writes:

> If we wish to discuss knowledge in the most highly developed contemporary society, we must answer the preliminary question of what methodological representation to apply to that society. Simplifying to the extreme, it is fair to say that in principle there have been, at least over the last half-century, two basic representational models for society: either society

> forms a functional whole, or it is divided in two. An illustration of the first model is suggested by Talcott Parsons (at least the postwar Parsons) and his school, and of the second, by the Marxist current (all of its component schools, whatever differences they may have, accept the principle of class struggle and dialectics as a duality operating in society (11).

Clearly the representation model of the social bond operative in Benjamin's statement is the second of these, that is, the view that society is characterized by struggle. To adopt this model is necessarily to acknowledge the relation of culture and power; it is to recognize that cultural heritage is a story the victor tells.

Lyotard himself attempts to recast the issue of the social bond in terms of speech act theory. "The question of the social bond," he argues, "insofar as it is a question, is itself a language game, the game of inquiry. It immediately positions the person who asks, as well as the addressee and the referent asked about: it is already the social bond" (15). (The question "Which are the classical writings for Canadianists" is, one might add, also the game of inquiry and similarly an enactment of the social bond.) Although Lyotard attempts to reformulate the question of the social bond, he readily acknowledges that language itself is characterized by struggle. "What is needed," he argues, "if we are to understand social relations in this manner, on whatever scale we choose, is not only a theory of communication, but a theory of games which accepts agonistics as a founding principle" (16). Speech, Lyotard recognizes, is related to, indeed, inseparable from, power.

Power, as the title "*William Dawe in Command*" suggests, is very much at issue in Dawe's questioning of Anna Yellowbird. The polite phrasing of his question, "Can you tell us where the bones are," is belied by his tone of condescension and by his complete disregard for the person he is addressing, a disregard that is, in Kroetsch's narrative, based as much on gender as on race. Anna Dawe's critique of the male narrative, offered in the form of a commentary on her father's expedition, is in large measure a response to that male dismissal and is an enactment in discourse of the struggle between the sexes. "*Why it was left to me*," she declares at the outset of her commentary,

> *I don't know: women are not supposed to have stories. We are supposed to sit at home, Penelopes to their wars and their sex. As my mother did. As I was doing* (3).

Badlands is, in large measure, the story of one woman daring, with the help of another, to move from silence to speech, to speak, to speak out

against the male narrative, the "western yarn those men were trying to tell each other."

Although we tend to idealize speech as a conversation between equals, as Edward Said points out, "the discursive situation is more usually like the unequal relation between colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed" (48). Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* explores the social bond in terms of the discursive situation and Atwood, like Said, sees it as a relation between colonizer and colonized, oppressor and oppressed. In Atwood's novel, a dystopia, men are the colonizers; women, the colonized. The "handmaid's tale" itself — there are also historical notes to which I shall return shortly — is a first-person narrative. The speaker is nameless; she is known only by the patronymic "Offred" — "Of/fred" — and by her role as handmaid, that is, as a woman forced to serve as a "surrogate mother," to bear children for the elite in the Republic of Gilead, a turn-of-the-century theocracy formed through revolution in what used to be the United States. The theocracy is formed on Old Testament precepts. Women become, once again, the possessions of men and their place in society is defined by the task assigned them — as housekeepers, as handmaids, etc. Offred, who describes herself and the other handmaids as "two-legged wombs" (128), is valued only for the children she might conceive; and the children she bears will, of course, be denied her. One of the precepts she and other handmaids learn at the "Red Centre," where fertile women are "retrained as handmaids," is "*From each ... according to her ability, to each, according to his need.* We recited that," Offred remarks, "three times, after dessert. It was from the Bible, or so they said. St. Paul again, in Acts" (111).

The women are denied power by being deprived of their identity, and they are deprived of their identity by being denied the right to speak, the right to constitute themselves as a subject in discourse. The women are denied their identity, in part, by being stripped of their names. "My name isn't Offred," the narrator declares at one point,

> I have another name, which nobody uses now because it's forbidden. I tell myself it doesn't matter, your name is like your telephone number, useful only to others; but what I tell myself is wrong, it does matter. I keep the knowledge of this name like something hidden, some treasure I'll come back to dig up, one day. I think of this name as buried (87-8).

At other times, however, she feels as though she herself has died and is buried with her name. "We are containers," she says elsewhere, "it is only the insides of our bodies that are important" (90). In place of her name, she is given not only the patronymic Of/fred but an identification number tattooed on her ankle: "Four digits and an eye, a passport in reverse. It's supposed to guarantee that I will never be able to fade, finally, into another

landscape. I am too important, too scarce for that. I am a national resource" (60-1).

Offred is denied not only her name but the opportunity to constitute herself as a subject in discourse. In the Republic of Gilead, reading and writing are prohibited to all but the elite and speech itself is highly regulated. Early in the narrative Offred imagines sitting in a kitchen, drinking coffee and making small talk with other women. "How I used to despise such talk," she remarks, "Now I long for it. At least it was talk. An exchange, of sorts" (11). In "Subjectivity in Language" Emile Benveniste argues that subjectivity, that is, our ability to conceive ourselves as persons, is a function of discourse, of such exchange. "Ego," he argues, "is he who *says* 'ego.' That is where we see the foundation of 'subjectivity,' which is determined by the linguistic status of 'person.'"

> Consciousness of self is only possible if it is experienced by contrast. I use *I* only when I am speaking to someone who will be *you* in my address. It is this condition of dialogue that is constitutive of *person*, for it implies that reciprocally "I" becomes "you" in the address of the one who in his [sic] turn designates himself [sic] as *I*. Here we see a principle whose consequences are to spread out in all directions. Language is possible only because each speaker sets himself [sic] up as a *subject* by referring to himself [sic] as *I* in his [sic] discourse. Because of this, I posits another person, the one who, being, as he [sic] is, completely exterior to "me," becomes my echo to whom I say *you* and who says *you* to me (224-5).

Offred is forbidden such exchanges and thus denied the possibility of constituting herself in discourse. "He has something we don't have," she remarks of the Commander, who is about to read aloud from the Bible, "he has the word. How we squandered it, once" (84).

To tell your own life story, as Offred does, is a subversive act, an act of treason. "I would like to believe this is a story I'm telling," she declares,

> I need to believe it. I must believe it. Those who can believe that such stories are only stories have a better chance.
>
> If it's a story I'm telling, then I have control over the ending. Then there will be an ending, to the story, and real life will come after it. I can pick up where I left off.
>
> It isn't a story I'm telling.
>
> It's also a story I'm telling, in my head, as I go along.

> Tell, rather that write, because I have nothing to write with and writing is in any case forbidden. But if it's a story, even in her head, I must be telling it to someone. You don't tell a story only to yourself. There is always someone else.
>
> Even when there is no one.
>
> A story is like a letter. *Dear You*, I'll say. Just *you*, without a name. Attaching a name attaches *you* to the world of fact, which is riskier, more hazardous; who knows what the chances are out there, of survival, yours? I will say *you*, *you*, like an old love song. *You* can mean more than one (37).

The "handmaid's tale," as we have it, is of course more than a story in Offred's head. Offred does not disclose the immediate circumstances in which she tells her life story but we do know that she speaks into a microphone, recording her narrative on tape cassettes, recording her story over and camouflaging it with such music as "Elvis Presley's Golden Years" and "Twisted Sister at Carnegie Hall."

In many ways, Offred's story *is* "an old love song" addressed to us, inviting us, as readers, to participate in the telling of her story, in the affirmation of her self. It is part of her treason to imagine such an exchange. "I keep on going with this sad and hungry and sordid, this limping and mutilated story," she affirms late in her narrative,

> Because after all I want you to hear it, as I will hear yours too if I ever get the chance, if I meet you or you escape, in the future or in Heaven, or in prison or underground, some other place. What they have in common is that they're not here. By telling you anything at all I am at least believing in you. I believe you're there, I believe you into being. Because I'm telling you this story, I will you into existence. I tell, therefore you are (251).

In telling her story, Offred wills not only us — the "you" — into existence but herself — the "I" — as well. The "you" becomes the means by which the "I" composes herself. "I compose myself" (62, 104), Offred notes at one point, "My self is a thing I must now compose, as one composes a speech. What I must present is a made thing, not something born" (62). She composes herself in and defines herself through the act of narration. And in composing herself, she affirms her own identity, becomes an "I", her own subject. In defiance of the master narrative of Gileadean society, she produces her own narrative, her own meaning, her own value.

I am drawn to *The Handmaid's Tale*, both because of its exploration of the relation among language, subjectivity and power, and because of its

pointed and forceful statement that the relation between speaker and hearer, between the "I" and the "you," is seldom a relation between equals. In Gileadean society, not to mention in our own, speech is, to quote Michel Foucault, "not mere verbalization of conflicts and systems of domination, but ... the very object of man's [sic] conflicts" (216); in Gilead, the production of discourse, like so many other, more tangible things in that society, is strictly controlled. In denying Offred the opportunity to designate herself as an "I," in prohibiting her access to discourse, the Gileadean power structure denies her subjectivity, denies her the opportunity to constitute herself. "What we prayed for," Offred states concerning her "retraining" at the Red Centre, "was emptiness, so we would be worthy to be filled: with grace, with love, with self-denial, semen and babies ... Oh God, obliterate me. Make me fruitful" (182).

The "Historical Notes" that conclude Atwood's novel do violence to the discursive relationship established in the opening pages of the tale and thus to our understanding of Offred herself. We move from one mode of discourse, in which we are included in the reciprocal production of meaning, in the exchange which Offred seeks, to another, in which we are excluded from that production; we move, in short, from what Jean-François Lyotard terms the pragmatics of narrative knowledge to that of scientific knowledge. In the Historical Notes the NOW of the narrative shifts from Offred's time to the year 2195 and to the proceedings of the "Twelfth Symposium of Gileadean Studies" held "at the University of Denay, Nunavit" (281). The speaker is Professor James Darcy Piexoto, the Director of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Archives at Cambridge University, England — some things, you will note, just don't seem to change — and the co-editor, along with Knotly Wade, of Offred's tale, which they have transcribed from the recently discovered tapes. The title of his talk is "Problems of Authentication in Reference to *The Handmaid's Tale*." Piexoto is concerned not with the production of meaning, not with Offred's struggle for self but with the product itself; he is concerned not with the human voice but with the object, the tapes.

The Historical Notes, which are a transcript of Piexoto's paper and of Professor Maryann Crescent Moon's introduction of the speaker, constitute a reading of, a response to, Offred's narrative, a reading that denies Offred's struggle for identity — denies, indeed, her subjectivity — and robs her struggle of meaning. "If I may be permitted an editorial aside," the professor declares at one point,

> allow me to say that in my opinion we must be cautious about passing moral judgement upon the Gileadeans. Surely, we have learned by now that such judgments are of necessity culture-specific. Also, Gileadean society was under a good deal of pressure, demographic and otherwise, and was subject to

> factors from which we ourselves are happily more free. Our job is not to censure but to understand.

For this last statement, the transcript tells us, he is applauded. But can we, who have found ourselves addressed in the tale, join in that applause? "Maybe none of this is about control," Offred concedes midway through her narrative,

> Maybe it isn't really about who can own whom, who can do what to whom and get away with it, even as far as death. Maybe it isn't about who can sit and who has to kneel or stand or lie down, legs spread open. Maybe it's about who can do what to whom and be forgiven for it. Never tell me it amounts to the same thing (126-7).

In the Historical Notes we learn what history teaches; we learn "who can do what to whom and be forgiven for it." We witness the insertion of Offred's narrative into an institutional discourse that empties her story of meaning, that inscribed it within the master narrative, the history, of yet another patriarchal society. And, if we have been engaged in and moved by the earlier narrative, we are deeply offended.

Piexoto is more interested in the possible identity of "Fred" than of "Offred" and he laments Offred's failure to tell us more about the Commander she served. Offred herself becomes little more than the object, the butt of her editor's sexual puns. Noting that Offred did not give her own story a title, he remarks:

> the superscription "The Handmaid's Tale" was appended to it by Professor Wade, partly in homage to the great Geoffrey Chaucer; but those of you who know Professor Wade informally, as I do, will understand when I say that I am sure all puns were intentional, particularly that having to do with the archaic vulgar signification of the word *tail*; that being, to some extent, the bone, as it were, of contention, in that phase of Gileadean society of which our narrative treats (283).

Atwood's point, as I understand it, is that the "bone of contention" is not the "tail" — t-a-i-l — but the "tale" — t-a-l-e, that is, Offred's struggle to compose herself and to be recognized as a subject, as one who speaks. Atwood's point is also that power acts through and is, in effect, synonymous with discourse. In the Historical Notes we witness the academic institution of the day, and the discourse of History, preventing Offred — as Gileadean society had done — from constituting herself as a subject.

IV

"Which are the classical writings for Canadians?" "Can you tell us where the bones are?" Canadianists as bone hunters. In search of the perfect skeleton. Written by the discourse of the modern university. Producing meaning, value, but pretending to find, to uncover it. Writing essays as commentaries on those finds. "Problems of Authentication in...." Inserting the latest discovery into an institutionalized discourse, inscribing it in a master narrative, the history of our own society. Cultural heritage — the story we tell.

As I stated at the outset, I see little point in arguing against the conception of a canon. Texts, as Said points out, "are a system of forces institutionalized by the reigning culture at some human cost to its various components" (53). There is no master narrative; there are, in fact, many narratives that compete for that status; and there is, of course, the story we tell. In *this* essay I have privileged two texts: Robert Kroetsch's *Badlands* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. More importantly, I have privileged the question of the relation between gender and value, gender and canon. Given that I live in a country that "officially" recognizes two founding cultures, two languages; given that I am a member of an organization that calls itself "The Association for Canadian and Quebec Literatures / Association des littératures canadiennes et québécoises," I could just as easily have privileged another set of texts and issues. (In the French language version of the call for papers, "Which are the classical writings for Canadianists? (seminal books and articles reviewed and considered) becomes "les corpus de base pour les études canadiennes: critiques et nouveaux développements.") Although I could have privileged different texts and a different issue, my point would, I think, have been the same. If texts "are a system of forces institutionalized by the reigning culture at some cost to its various components," if the cultural heritage is the story the victor tells, then we need a better understanding of the forces at work, of the normative function of the institutions in which we find ourselves, and of the place from which we, as Canadianists, speak.

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Rota Herzberg Lister

What is a Classic? The Case for Canadian Drama

Le Canada a la chance d'être parmi les nations qui ont un répertoire considérable de littérature théâtrale. Après une période d'expansion, la culture théâtrale canadienne entre à présent dans une période de consolidation. Celle-ci implique une classification et le choix de critères apprpriés à cette dernière. Le concept de "classique", une oeuvre qui mérite une reconnaissance officielle en tant que faisant partie du canon de la littérature théatrale canadienne, est exploré et appliqué à trois oeuvres caractéristiques des XVIII^e^, XIX^e^ et XX^e^ siècles. C'est seulement l'oeuvre la plus récente qui semble satisfaire aux nombreux critères de durée et d'universalité alors que les oeuvres antérieures méritent le statut canonique en vertu de leur intérêt historique.

Not every country has a substantial body of dramatic literature. Few nations have achieved one of the Golden Ages of drama and theatre. Even fewer can look back upon a sustained historical tradition of dramatic writing and theatrical performances. If, then, there have been frequent expressions of dismay in the years since 1967 about the tardiness of an evolution of indigenous Canadian playwriting, such expressions require to be examined in a broader context of world drama.

Produced as one of Toronto's Factory Theatre Lab "Works '76 Festival of One-Act Plays," John Palmer's *Henrik Ibsen: On the Necessity of Producing Norwegian Theatre* makes this global and historical context dramatically clear; *Henrik Ibsen*, the representative modern national dramatic voice, addresses the Canadian audience in this monodrama:

> (A plain wooden podium. On the front of it, facing the audience is a simple sign attached to the podium. The sign reads: "The Society For The Encouragement of The Norwegian Theatre." On the top of the podium, to the right, is a small Norwegian flag inserted in a little stand. Under the top of the podium and not visible to the audience is a Union Jack the same size as the Norwegian flag. Beside the Podium is a plain glass jug of water and a perfectly plain shapeless glass on a small pewter tray. Beside this is a small wooden gavel.) ...
>
> HENRIK IBSEN takes the podium. He is a short giant of about seventy, a vile, crotchety, condescending, glowering, impatient and explosive man. He is the very cliché of aged genius. He is dressed in his own period, very conservatively (c. 1900). If he ever smiles, it is the malicious glint of one who knows that his audience will have difficulty following him. And yet he loves what he is doing, what he is talking about. He looks quickly about and starts talking. During the course of his speech he will work up to fever pitches, loosen his tie and collar, take off his coat and have to take frequent drinks to calm himself down....[1]

The character of this representative modern playwright gets down to his main purpose very quickly:

> It is not necessary to produce Norwegian drama: it is hardly necessary to produce anything. A bushel of potatoes, the odd musk-ox and a cave ensure a kind of survival. What civilization has presumed to be about is an improvement in the quality of survival, or existence as we call it, having replaced caves with houses. This social order has now developed into what we call nations.
>
> It seems to me that we in Norway are having difficulty with the definition of a nation. This is not surprising as we have been a part of first Denmark and then Sweden up until the present year. We have not, in fact, been a nation since the middle ages, long enough to have forgotten the sensation. (2-3)

To make the Norwegian cultural parallel apparent to Canadian audiences of the nineteen seventies, Palmer generalizes this definition of a nation in terms of folk culture as well as linguistic and historical components:

> What is a nation? Sardines? Reindeer? Is it the quality of sunsets or the funny head-dresses of peasants? But I speak to an educated audience who cannot possibly confuse these banal sentimentalities with the harsh necessities of nationhood, an audience who no doubt demands a sterner definition of that sacred state of independence in which they claim to abide. A nation is numbers of people either of diverse backgrounds or sharing a common history, language and aspirations etc., living in a territory defined by specific boundaries. The soul of humanity is in its diversity and each nation's uniqueness ... an added happy factor to the sum total of the human genius. It should therefore cause little mental effort to see that while art in general is an international commodity, it is produced by an artist of a particular culture and there is, in fact, no such thing as an international work of art. (He takes a drink of water....)
>
> It is presumably in the interest of most nations to concern themselves with their own self-preservation. I am stating the obvious because it seems to me that most Norwegians are labouring under the illusion that a nation is a very peculiar sort of tree needing only boundaries and no water to sustain it. Self preservation is manifested by nations in three basic areas: the political which is a concern for boundaries, the economic which is a concern for material prosperity and may involve boundaries, and the cultural which is a concern for being ourselves as opposed to others and which keeps us from reverting entirely to the first two concerns, that is from becoming ordinary animals such as sheep. Thus it is no accident that the great nations of the world have taken the greatest care in the protection of all three areas ... (3)

This particular concrete and theatrical version of a widespread concern with Canadian cultural identity and autonomy found many and varied expressions during the nineteen seventies, from Alberta publisher Mel Hurtig's little 1975 pamphlet, "Never Heard of Them ... They Must Be Canadian," to Susan Crean's 1976 study *Who's Afraid of Canadian Culture?* In theatrical terms, the argument for an indigenous Canadian culture is perhaps given its most succinct formulation by playwright Tom Hendry, co-founder of the Manitoba Theatre Centre:

> In England, theatres present mainly English plays; in the United States, plays by Americans dominate repertoires; in Albania, one sees Albanian plays; in Poland, Polish plays form the bulk of fare; in France, French plays are customarily given. Far from being abnormal, the indigenous expression of

> a nation's culture in its theatres is so utterly *normal* that we feel it is pathetic to have to mention the fact. It is only in the neo-colonial phase of a nation's development — periods in which Canada and Australia find themselves — that the abnormal situation is found wherein the native playwright cannot find a welcome reception in his own theatre.[2]

We now have a substantial body of Canadian produced and published drama. In its 1980 edition, *The Brock Bibliography of Published Canadian Plays in English 1766-1978* lists more than 2,500 plays. As a variety of recent scholarly endeavours have made clear, the time for consolidation has arrived.

One of the tasks of a period of consolidation of cultural advances is, of course, the appraisal of what has already been achieved. While some of this critical assessment takes the continuous form of performance reviews by a variously qualified group of drama and theatre critics employed by our daily press and the intermittent form of Chalmers Awards for best Canadian play of the season and similar prizes bringing special recognition to specific plays and playwrights, a more lasting and comprehensive sorting and categorizing of this body of Canadian dramatic literature written in English (as well as French, of course) is required if we are to reach some plateau of objective standards and selection of best and most representative plays.

A number of individual dramatic works of the period since Centennial Year achieved multiple productions and even international acclaim, among them in particular John Herbert's 1967 prison drama *Fortune and Men's Eyes*, George Ryga's 1967 dramatization of the plight of West Coast Native People, *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, Sharon Pollock's 1980 metadrama *Blood Relations* and Erika Ritter's 1980 version of the entertainer as Canadian woman, *Automatic Pilot*. David French's 1972 *Leaving Home* was so popular that it produced something of a bandwagon effect in Canadian amateur and professional theatres alike. Such success stories, which are becoming more frequent, are an indication of the growing maturity of our audiences and boards of directors. They do not, however, promise the kind of continuing recognition in both theatrical and academic circles which we associate with the works of William Shakespeare, Friedrich von Schiller, Anton Chechov or Arthur Miller. A more systematic approach is clearly required to bring into lasting focus Canadian dramatic works and their authors which our students and their students will want to pass on to our posterity of the twenty-first and twenty-second centuries.

The task of making these choices is one of great responsibility requiring very solid preparation both with respect to the main tradition of world drama and theatre and the history and aesthetic of Canadian theatrical works. It is a task requiring more than one mind, more than one well-qualified specialist in the field. Beginnings have been made.

The foundations for such beginnings were laid during the innovative and productive seventies, with the founding of three specialist journals, *Canadian Theatre Review* in 1974, *Canadian Drama/L'Art dramatique canadien* in 1975, and *Theatre History in Canada/Histoire du théâtre au Canada* in 1980. Each of these Ontario-based academic journals is a response to a specific dimension of Canadian theatre culture: the first to professional theatre activities in Canada and around the world, the second to the critical study of Canadian dramatic literature, the third to the archaeology of knowledge about Canadian theatrical culture. Their sheer survival despite great funding difficulties demonstrates their necessity and usefulness.

Other milestones of consolidation were several national conferences, especially the two national professional and academic meetings of the leaders in the field, "Face to Face" held at Concordia University in Montreal in 1975 and "Canadian Theatre Today" hosted by the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon in 1981. The former was a first general encounter which enabled us to make those connections which constitute the matrix of a national network. The latter was a landmark of assessment, of re-affirmation of our shared goals and of formulation of tasks for the next decade. Most significant in terms of the development of a tradition of Canadian dramatic literature among the 1981 presentations was Jerry Wasserman's paper "Toward the Definitive Anthology."[3] The result of this paper has been the publication in 1984-85 of three new anthologies of modern Canadian drama, edited by Vancouverite Wasserman himself, Haligonian Richard Perkyns and Kingstonian Richard Plant. John Herbert's *Fortune and Men's Eyes* appears in all three: it is still our one truly major international success story. While the three editors show considerable agreement about the major playwrights who have written for Canadian audiences since the nineteen thirties, they do differ in their selection of works and also demonstrate some idiosyncratic preferences. The criteria for selection vary as well, with Wasserman emphasizing the academic teaching context, Perkyns the historical significance of each playwright included and Plant concentrating on the social function of drama.

Earlier anthologies of Canadian drama, such as Vincent Massey's *Canadian Plays from Hart House Theatre* (1926; 1927) did make some attemps to place the plays in a general cultural framework; however, these new versions of the anthology of Canadian drama, as Wasserman's conference paper suggests, attempt to bring to bear academic scholarship on the task of creating a definitive version for Canadian readers and theatre people. As Wasserman notes, "Canadian drama has fought its way to respectability over the past 15 years." One might say, evoking a very distant but foundation model of scholarship both textual and critical, that the Hellenistic period of Canadian drama has begun. Whether any of the present academic scholars in the field can consider themselves to be the Callimachus of Canadian drama remains for our successors to determine. In the third century B.C., the *oeuvre* of Greek literature was extensive and Callimachus'

undertaking of creating his lists of the entire body of Greek literature, the *Pinakes*, established a broadly useful model for future scholarship. We have many historic models and precedents for our task. Paradigms of genres from Cicero and Horace to Sidney and Dryden as well as critics' and anthologists' general and individual canons are at our disposal, as the Scottish scholar Alastair Fowler reminds us in his 1979 article "Genre and the Literary Canon."[4]

What, then, are some of the criteria which can be used to guide us in the general endeavour to separate the enduring from the ephemeral, the solid artistic achievement from the trendy but insufficiently revised box office hit? History is certainly one criterion: every national literature and the major genres within it require roots, whether these be the pageant plays of the medieval church, predecessors of several great European dramatic literatures, or the several eighteenth-century verse tragedies catalogued in *The Brock Bibliography of Published Canadian Plays in English 1766-1978*. While these dramas, Robert Rogers' *Ponteach; or, The Savages of America* (1766), and George Cockings' *The Conquest of Canada; or, The Siege of Quebec* (1766) have survived on library shelves and have also received some recent critical attention, the responsibility for evaluating their literary and dramatic quality cannot be avoided. Can they be regarded as Canadian classics?

What constitutes a classic, a work to be accorded canonical status in a given national literature, is therefore a fundamental question to be applied to historical and contemporary works alike. As Frank Kermode reminds us, Aulus Gellius, a second-century Roman author concerned with correctness of various kinds was the first writer in European literary history to have called his choices of authorities "classics."[5] Citing the nineteenth-century French critic Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve and his October 1850 *causerie*, "Qu'est-ce qu'un classique?" Kermode relies upon Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot to arrive at a flexible formulation of the concept of the classic: "It seems that on a just view of the matter the books we call classics possess intrinsic qualities that endure, but possess also an openness to accommodation which keeps them alive under endlessly varying dispositions." (44)

Testing this broad definition against the *dramatis personae* and opening lines of *Ponteach: or The Savages of America*,[6] we can obtain the following tentative results: the leader of the Indian uprising is represented as "PONTEACH, Indian *Emperor on the great Lakes*," his opponents are "*Colonel* COCKUM and *Captain* FRISK, *Commanders at a Garrison in* Ponteach's *Country*," as well as several "English *Governors*" named SHARP, GRIP and CATCHUM. The cast is amplified by other Indian leaders named *The* BEAR and *The* WOLF, Indian *Traders* named McDOLE and MURPHEY and English *Hunters* named HONNYMAN and ORSBOURN. The names, then, mingle the dignified with the grotesque in the tradition of Elizabethan and Jacobean history plays.

The opening dialogue of the first scene, set in an Indian *Trading House*, is an exchange between McDole and Murphey:

> *McDole*. So, Murphey, you are come to try your Fortune
> Among the Savages in this wild Desart?
>
> *Murphey*. Ay, any Thing to get an honest Living,
> Which 'faith I find it hard enough to do;
> Times are so dull, and Traders are so plenty,
> That Gains are small, and Profits come but slow.
>
> *McDole* Are you experienc'd in this kind of Trade?
> Know you the Principles by which it prospers,
> And how to make it lucrative and safe?
> If not, you're like a Ship without a Rudder,
> That drives at random, and must surely sink.
>
> *Murphey* I'm unacquainted with your Indian Commerce,
> And gladly would I learn the Arts from you,
> Who're old, and practis'd in them many Years.
>
> *McDole* That is the curst Misfortune of our Traders,
> A thousand Fools attempt to live this Way,
> Who might as well turn Ministers of State.

The general conditions for the uprising are led up to indirectly in this opening discussion of the advantages of colonial trading to the white newcomers. The language is neo-classical in its generality, the verse end-stopped and very regular. Though this may be a well-observed and accurate dramatization of colonial conditions with which Major Robert Rogers was quite familiar, the verse lacks some of the excitement and vibrancy associated with great dramatic dialogue. It is a classic in the sense that it does give us literary access to our own past but is also dated in that it is restricted in the necessary openness to accommodation.

A century later, Charles Heavysege's tragic trilogy *Saul* (1857)[7] attempts to formulate a Victorian version of a classic story from the history of ancient Israel, the tragic fall of its first king. The *dramatis personae* are generally biblical but also add such Christian apparatus as GLORIEL, *Chief of the Celestial Spirits*, ZOE, *Saul's Guardian-Angel* and MALZAH *the "Evil Spirit from the Lord."* The opening scene, set on the *Hill of God, with the Philistine garrison adjacent*, introduces "*A number of* DEMONS *dancing*; ZAPH, *their chief, observing them, and* ZEPHO *gazing intently in an opposite direction.*"

ZAPH. Gently; this is sacred ground:
Foot it in a quiet round. Zepho, keep a keen look-out,
So that none disturb the bout.
What now behold'st thou?

ZEPHO. A great rabble.

ZAPH. Of What composed?

ZEPHO. Of prophets mostly.
With solemn sound they stalk quite ghostly;
And, 'midst them, one whose height and port
Declare him of superior sort.

ZAPH. Dost thou know him?

ZEPHO. Methinks I do.

ZAPH. Strain through the air thy lyng-like view (*Aside*). With such, oft angles come and danger.

ZEPHO. Yes, now I know the towering stranger:
His name is Saul, one Kish's son.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* appears to have supplied the model for these opening lines, even to the point of the inclusion of rhyming lines. The choice of diction does have some resonance, as in "sacred ground" but alliterative lines like "with solemn sound they stalk quite ghostly" mingle the auditory and visual imagery in such general terms that we are more aware of the sound of the words than their imagistic meaning. This work may thus be considered a classic in its linkage of Canadian dramatic writing with the two great traditions inherited by our culture: the biblical and the Elizabethan. Like most nineteenth-century pseudo-Shakespearean verse dramas, the play lacks the immediacy of the Canadian experience which is available to the readers of Rogers' play. It, too, is lacking in openness to accommodation. As John Herbert's *Fortune and Men's Eyes*[8] appears in the three anthologies of 1984-85, a test of its durability and universality seems to be most appropriate. The characters are:

SMITTY, a good-looking, clean-cut youth of clear intelligence, aged seventeen years. He has the look of a collegiate athlete. The face is strong and masculine with enough sensitivity in feature and expression to soften the sharp outline. He is of a type that everyone seems to like, almost on sight.

ROCKY, a youth of nineteen years who seems older and harder than his age should allow, though there is an emotional immaturity that reveals itself constantly. He has a nature, driven by fear, that uses hatred aggressively to protect itself, taking pride in harbouring no soft or gentle feelings. He lives like a cornered rat, vicious, dangerous and unpredictable. He is handsome in a lean, cold dark, razor-featured way.

QUEENIE, a large, heavy-bodied youth of nineteen or twenty with the strength of a wrestler but the soft white skin of a very blond person. Physical appearance is a strange combination of softness and hulking strength. For a large person he moves with definite grace and fine precision, almost feminine in exactness, but in no way frivolous or fluttery. Movements, when exaggerated purposely, are big, showy and extravagant. The face is dainty in features as a "cupie-doll's" plump-cheeked and small-nosed. The mouth has a pouting, self-indulgent look, but the eyes are hard, cold, and pale blue like ice. The hair is fair, fine, and curly, like a baby's. One looks at him and thinks of a madam in a brothel ... coarse, cruel, tough and voluptuously pretty.

MONA, a youth of eighteen or nineteen years, of a physical appearance that arouses resentment at once in many people, men and women. He seems to hang suspended between the sexes, neither boy nor woman. He is slender, narrow-shouldered, long-necked, long-legged, but never gauche or ungainly. He moves gracefully, but not self-consciously. His nature seems almost more feminine than effeminate because it is not mannerism that calls attention to an absence of masculinity so much as the sum of his appearance, lightness of movement, and gentleness of action. His effeminacy is not aggressive ... just exists. The face is responsible for his nick-name of "Mona Lisa." Features are madonna-like, straight-nosed, patrician-mouthed and sadeyed. Facial contour is oval and the expression enigmatic. If he had been a woman, some would have described him as having a certain ethereal beauty.

GUARD, a rugged-faced man of about forty-five to fifty, who looks like an ex-army officer. He has a rigid military bearing, a look of order and long acquaintance with discipline. He presents an impressive exterior of uniformed law enforcement, but one senses behind the unsmiling features some nagging doubt or worry, as if something of his past returned occasionally to haunt him, when he would prefer it forgotten.

> At these moments, his actions are uneasy and he does not seem impressive, in spite of his uniform. He has a stomach ulcer that causes him much physical discomfort, manifesting itself in loud belching.

The scene is "A Canadian reformatory, prep school for the penitentiary." The opening dialogue sets the mood for the induction of Smitty, accompanied by a background choir of boys' voices singing "Alouette," "Down in the Valley" and "Jesus Loves Me." Before the lights come up on the cell shared by the cast, a boy's voice is heard singing:

> Oh, if I had the wings of an angel
> Over these prison walls would I fly - (Sound of metal doors clanging open and shut. And sound of heavy boots marching along corridor.)
>
> VOICE. (English accent) Halt! Attention! Straighten that line! Guard! Take this one down and put him in Observation!
>
> GUARD. Yes sir! Smith! Step out — and smartly!
> (Lights come up.)
>
> BOY's VOICE (singing) Oh, if I had the wings of -
>
> QUEENIE (on stage) Oh, if I had the wings of an angel
> And the ass of a big buffalo,
> I would fly to the heavens above me,
> And crap on the people below.
>
> VOICE (English accent; raised now, the voice is not only gruff as before but high and shrill in overtone, like Hitler's recorded speech)
> And you, Canary-Bird — shut that bloody row, or I shall cut off your seed supply.
>
> (Repeated sound of metal doors, and of boots marching away)

As modern drama, *Fortune and Men's Eyes* inherits the Shavian tradition of long and detailed descriptive stage directions, of realistic setting and dialogue. In its particular combination of visual and auditory stimuli, it draws upon the long tradition of multiple resonances first defined and classified by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. In its evocation of physical and social types, it achieves the condition of the concrete universal. Its title, derived from Shakespeare's Sonnet 29, places it in the great tradition of English drama and literature: its modern particulars are contemporary and Canadian

versions of the old story of the social misfit, the outcast, the sorrows that have been inflicted upon the dispossessed and recorded in drama and poetry from Sophocles and Theocritus to the present. Though the diction is crude, the emotional and intellectual associations are rich. The play merits the title of classic in its versatility and adaptability as well as in its social accuracy.

In his attempt to formulate "An Idea and Ideal of a Literary Canon,"[9] (1984) Charles Altieri concludes:

> Texts can enter ... [the] canonical theatre in a variety of ways — for example, by their power to interpret their own historicity, by their deep grasp of perennial features of human experience, or by their construction of compelling ideals for human work. In order to participate as readers in any of these achievements, we must try to state the author's probable intended action within history in the most abstract context of problems and responses. Then the author's achievement can step out of history. Dante's intense imaginative reconstruction of his world becomes a potentially timeless grappling with problems of exile, with concrete challenges for the reader to satisfactorily respond to a range of perennial character traits and action types, with questions of how an individual comes to understand the nature of justice and love, and, finally, with dialectical paths through which one can give order to experiences that, taken singly, overwhelm one's ordinary understanding. (61-2)

If *Fortune and Men's Eyes* is a clearer candidate for the status of canonicity, *Ponteach* and *Saul* both contribute to the development of a distinctly Canadian perspective upon our inherited cultural traditions as well as the concrete experiences and spiritual frameworks of the Northern half of the New World of North America.

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Notes

1. John Palmer, *Henrik Ibsen: On the Necessity of Producing Norwegian Theatre* (Toronto: Toronto Playwrights Co-op, 1976) 1. All subsequent page references to this work will be given in parentheses in the text.
2. Tom Hendry, "Theatre in Canada: A Reluctant Citizen," in *Getting It Back*, ed. by Abraham Rotstein and Gary Lax (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company Limited, 1974) 275.
3. Jerry Wasserman, "Toward the Definitive Anthology," *Canadian Theatre Review* 34 (1982) 172-9.

4. Alastair Fowler, "Genre and the Literary Canon," *New Literary History* XI:1 (1979) 97-119.
5. Frank Kermode, *The Classic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975, 1983) 15. All subsequent references to this work will be given in parentheses in the text.
6. Robert Rogers, *Ponteach; or The Savages of America* (London: Author, 1766).
7. Charles Heavysege, *Saul and Selected Poems*, ed. Sandra Djwa (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) 8-328.
8. John Herbert, *Fortune and Men's Eyes* (New York, 1967) 7-96.
9. Charles Altieri, "An Idea and Ideal of a Literary Canon," in *Canons*, ed. by Robert von Hallberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 41-64. Subsequent references are given in parentheses in the text.

Christopher M. Armitage

Canadian Literature in *one* American Context

L'auteur rapporte ses expériences d'enseignement de la littérature anglo-canadienne dans deux universités de la Caroline du Nord (l'Université Duke et l'Université de la Caroline du Nord à Chapel Hill). Les réactions des étudiants aux textes proposés dans les cours est en grande partie explicable par la conjoncture historique et le contexte social dans lequel se situe l'enseignement.

This account is not an hubristic attempt to describe, still less to prescribe, how Canadian literature should be taught all across the United States, but to report how it has been and is being taught at two of the leading universities in North Carolina. That is not the Deep South, but it is far enough from the border as not to have the kind of contacts with Canada as do Maine, Vermont, upper New York State, Wisconsin, Washington State, etc.

Nevertheless, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has had an exchange with the University of Toronto, instigated over 20 years ago by their then-presidents, William Friday and Claude Bissell, through which 30-40 students spend a week at the other institution. They take in cultural activities of that region, e.g. sleigh-rides in Ontario, and attending a black church service in N.C. followed by a cook-out of soul food. Moreover, thanks to the leadership of Professor Richard Preston, for nearly two decades Duke University has had a program in Canadian Studies, at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The first of the continually-growing series of biennial conferences of ACSUS (the Association for Canadian Studies in

the United States) was held at Duke in 1971, and in 1976 Duke organized a wide-ranging conference on "American Revolution — Canadian Evolution" in honor of the bicentennial of 1776. Also under the auspices of Duke's program of Canadian Studies, a vigorous program of out-reach to primary and secondary schools is undertaken. In this region, therefore, Canada may be perceived as Ultima Thule but it is not entirely terra incognita.

Early in the 1970s I established a course in Canadian literature in English at Duke and at UNC. The times may have been propitious: the campus turbulence of the 1960s was subsiding, though leaving a legacy for experiment, and the notion that courses in business and computers were all that mattered had not yet become an article of faith. The course is an elective, and over half its takers have majors other than English. Since one semester is not enough to cover Canadian literature in English, that in French can receive little more than passing mention.

At first I proceeded historically, beginning with writings from the late 18th century. I soon discovered that this method made the course move too slowly and blunted the initial enthusiasm of students. Solly Bridgetower in Robertson Davies' novel *Leaven of Malice* is not the only student to have been unable to stomach the works of Charles Heavysege. Similarly, the pseudo-Keatsian introduction of Greek gods and dryads into Ontario and Manitoba landscapes has little appeal to today's students. But Southerners' long memory of Yankee carpetbaggers predisposes them to feel rapport with how the Bluenoses felt after Sam Slick had stolen a march through Nova Scotia.

The poems of the so-called Confederation poets get a mixed reception. Transcendental and pantheistic musings about God and the universe continue to awaken echoes in some youthful souls. The forlorn lover in Bliss Carman's poems is easily identified with, though maturer minds detect the self-indulgence; and speculation about exactly what happened in that canoe before the tide came flooding back into Grand Pré can produce some ribald interpretations. Lampman's "Heat" is well received, as are his poems attacking the rampant materialism of the modern world, a reaction which suggests that there are few yuppies taking the courses or else they are conveniently hypocritical. D.C. Scott's "The Piper of Arll" often proves to be a mystery, though not in the way Scott intended. Conversely, his poems about Indians are much admired.

The major twentieth-century poets come across well. The striking images and modern diction in the lyrics of Pratt, F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith, Birney, Layton, Klein, Souster, and Atwood are akin to those in modern British and American poetry, which most students have some familiarity with. Moreover, the mordant wit and satire evinced by many of the same poets appeal to a generation understandably sceptical about the discrepancies between what many in authority profess and what they do. Heavier work is made of the longer poems of Pratt, however. The careers of French Jesuits or Sir John A. Macdonald's parliamentary manoeuvres to get the Canadian

Pacific Railway built seem remote issues to my students. Pratt's poem *The Titanic* is an exception, particularly since the recent U.S. shuttle disaster.

In the twentieth century the writers whose achievements have done most to attract attention to Canadian literature, both at home and internationally, are novelists. For this reason, novels occupy an increasingly large place in the course I teach.

Hugh MacLennan's work is particularly useful for pedagogical purposes. His high seriousness and didacticism appeal not only to German academics but also to American students. Odyssean quests and other mythic patterns do indeed prove archetypal. Moreover, his novels serve nicely to illustrate the regional element in Canadian literature. *Barometer Rising* and *Each Man's Son* shed light on the Maritimes, *Two Solitudes* and *The Return of the Sphinx* on Québec, and *The Watch that Ends the Night* on both regions, with the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War and World War II added for good measure. And if a view of the future were sought, one might use his *Voices in Time*.

Another view of Nova Scotia is projected in Ernest Buckler's stories and his novel *The Mountain and the Valley*. These speak compellingly to Southern students, many of whom come from farm or rural backgrounds and have strong family ties. The atmosphere of Ontario small towns in Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches* and in Alice Munro's stories is recognizably akin to that in Southern fiction by Eudora Welty and Doris Betts. In Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*, Del Jordan's search for the right Christian denomination and her rejection of baptism at the hands of Garnet French is of particular interest to Southern Baptists. Likewise, the religious tensions and small-town hypocrisies in Sinclair Ross' *As For Me and My House* are evidently found in places far south of Horizon, Saskatchewan.

Margaret Laurence's Manawaka, Manitoba has its Southern counterpart in William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County. The depth and variety of the female protagonists in the five Manawaka books is much admired. In *The Diviners* the Métis characters are apparently more accessible to my students than those in Ruby Wiebe's *The Temptation of Big Bear* and *The Scorched-Wood People*, which are prolix for their tastes. Kroetsch's *Studhorse Man* is more palatable.

The prominence of women writers in Canadian literature, from Frances Brooke in 1769 to the present, naturally does not go unnoticed, especially as the percentage of female undergraduates on the Chapel Hill campus has steadily increased to its present 60% of the total.

Margaret Atwood's intensity, wit, and versatility create a strong impression. With the rise of women's studies in the U.S., *Surfacing* may have become the best-known Canadian novel, yet some of today's students claim that its issues are passé. But the visible influence of right-wing fundamentalists and the success of Republican presidential campaigns have given *The Handmaid's Tale* a reverberating relevance.

The latest generations were not born when John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Correspondingly, what those of us over 40 regard as current history is as remote as the Napoleonic wars to our students. A prime example is the notorious softball game on Hampstead Heath in Richler's *St. Urbain's Horseman*. The game itself of course presents no problems, but Richler's satiric comments about the claims made by certain of the aging players to have campaigned in the Spanish Civil War or to have been victimized by Senator Joe McCarthy need almost as much explaining as Dryden's allusions in *Absalom and Achitopel*. Curiously, Robertson Davies' novels present less difficulty for my students, perhaps because his expository skills and pedagogical experience enable him to make abstruse and arcane material seem instantly clear.

Concerning drama, I have found that a play is best studied in conjunction with a production of it; and since productions of Canadian plays are very rare in the South, they have very little place in my courses.

Let me conclude by repeating what many of the students say after taking a course in Canadian literature: Why haven't we discovered these writers before? — and now that we have, we're going to keep reading them!

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Dennis Drummond

The "I Am" Experience in *Bonheur d'Occasion*

Cette communication ajoute à mes arguments dans un article précédent où j'ai essayé de démontrer que la façon d'aborder la peinture des caractères dans Bonheur d'occasion *a été fortement influencée par l'existentialisme, que le roman suggère que celui qui dépend du "regard d'autrui" atteint un bonheur d'occasion parce qu'il ne cherche qu'une identité d'occasion. Dans le premier article je me suis référé à Florentine Lacasse et à Jean Lévesque pour illustrer cette idée; dans la communication actuelle je parle d'Azarius et d'Emmanuel, du même point de vue.*

Florentine, Jean et Azarius sont tous les trois victimes de "l'Autre", comme l'a défini Sartre. Tous les trois ne peuvent ressentir leur identité et leur existence qu'à travers leur reflet dans les yeux des autres. De plus, Azarius souffre d'une aliénation temporelle où il cherche son identité dans un passé idéalisé et où, en même temps, il refuse son vrai passé, parce qu'il voudrait échapper à son "être-pour-autrui". Sa décision de s'enrôler dans l'armée doit être vue de cette perspective existentialiste. Ce n'est pas une décision de "réinventer" sa vie, mais plutôt une décision qui reflète son incapacité de s'engager.

Emmanuel Létourneau présente un contraste avec les trois autres. En fait, Emmanuel satisfait l'exigence existentialiste qu'on s'invente par l'exercise de sa liberté. L'emploi par l'auteur de l'image de la montagne qui domine Montréal fait ressortir ce contraste entre Emmanuel et les autres. Sa décision de s'enrôler dans l'armée représente un vrai engagement, par contraste avec celle d'Azarius. Emmanuel se présente comme un héros existentialiste qui ressent profondément l'expérience du "je suis".

My paper builds on an article that I published last year, called "Identité d'occasion dans *Bonheur d'occasion*"[1], in which I argued that Gabrielle Roy's novel appeared to be deeply influenced by an existentialist approach to characterization, that the novel suggests that the person dependent on the "regard d'autrui" attains only a second-hand happiness precisely because he seeks a second-hand identity. I illustrated my argument by referring to Florentine Lacasse and Jean Lévesque, and I would like to begin today by referring to these two characters again,[2] before moving on to Azarius and Emmanuel.

According to Sartre, "... autrui est pour moi à la fois ce qui m'a volé mon être et ce qui fait qu'il y a un être qui est mon être."[3]

In Florentine this double rôle of the Other has exercised such a strong influence that she is completely alienated from her true potentiality and from her own experience of herself. The sense of her own identity cannot be expressed by the saying, "I am what I do." The very experience of "I am" is almost unknown to Florentine and it is this "I am" experience that is the precondition for the authentic realization of oneself in freedom.[4] She has reduced herself to the level of an object to such an extent that she can experience her identity and her existence only through their reflection in the eyes of others. The sense of herself as a subject who can freely perform her own acts is so weak in Florentine that she needs what Sartre would describe[5] as the mediation of Jean to acquire a kind of secondary strength:

> Il sembla à Florentine que, si elle se penchait vers ce jeune homme, elle respirerait l'odeur même de la grande ville risante, bien vêtue, bien nourrie, satisfaite et allant à des divertissements qui se paient cher.[6]

The language of this passage indicates the extent to which Florentine is lacking the "I am" experience. She cannot begin to live without leaning toward Jean. She needs him as an intermediary between herself and the world. No experience of herself as a subject who can act is possible for her, as the use of the verb "respirer" brings out-breathing can only be accomplished through Jean. From this point of view, the oft-quoted sentence: "Mais que cette ville l'appelait maintenant à travers Jean Lévesque,"[7] can be interpreted in a very existentialist way, if one takes account of the key word "à travers." Since Florentine is deprived of the "I am" experience she cannot know herself as being the subject of what happens and can experience life ("cette ville") only through another.[8]

Because her sense of identity is not authentic, because she sees herself as a commodity, Florentine does not experience her life as a dynamic process of self-transcendence in which she creates herself by her own acts. She experiences it rather as a series of rôles she must play in order to acquire a secondary sense of identity. The danger inherent in this constantly manifests itself through the freedom of the "regard d'autrui." At Emmanuel's

party, for example, Florentine, exhausted by her frantic dance, closes her eyes for a moment, and on opening them:

> ... elle surprenait, fixé sur elle, le regard souriant, froid de M. Létourneau. Cet homme semblait voir en elle la petite serveuse en butte aux grossièretés, née pour cet emploi et destinée à y rester toute sa vie. *Aussitôt qu'il la regardait*, elle se sentait reléguée dans la buée grasse des cuvettes....[9]

One can apply to Florentine the phrase used by Sartre to describe Lucien in "L'Enfance d'un Chef": "... il serait toujours cette immense attente des autres."[10]

Jean Lévesque does not know the "I am" experience either, because he has undergone a temporal alienation as a result of attempting what Sartre calls a "désolidarisation"[11] with his past. His life is a constant attempt to deny his past, something that is impossible from the existentialist point of view. Hence he drags his past around with him like a foreign object that is not really part of himself. This also explains why he is a victim of the "regard d'autrui." He has a constant need of the reassuring "regard d'autrui," which will demonstrate to him that he is no longer what he was. He feels he must frequent others from time to time in order to understand how superior he is to them and to see a look of admiration in their eyes.[12] Jean is actually impotent to the extent that he cannot realize his human potentialities by exercising his freedom in order to arrive at a sense of the integrity of his self. The result is a struggle for domination, thanks to which he hopes to attain a secondary sense of self.[13]

Paradoxically, this same phenomenon explains his refusal of commitment and his need to attain an absolute solitude:

> Jamais comme en ces moments-là il ne se félicitait aussi chaudement d'être seul, libre, entièrement libre, sans famille et sans amitié trop exigeante....[14]

Any contact at all with the freedom expressed through the "regard d'autrui" might perhaps rob him of his disguise, reveal him as he really is. Jean renounces any self-realization based on freedom and integrity rather than risk the humiliation of knowing for certain he is good for nothing:

> ... Le désir le gagnait de détruire cette parcelle d'amitié, de confiance qu'il avait encore dans le coeur, sa confiance dans les êtres, l'attrait si mince fût-il, qu'il ressentait pour les êtres, et de se retrouver sans confiance et seul, dans une solitude qui l'exaltait parce qu'il y trouvait comme la libre épanouissement de lui-même.[15]

In Sartrian terminology, Jean's attitude toward others and his need for "froide solitude"[16] can be considered as an attempt to escape his "être-pour-autrui," for it is only in such a void that he can find this "libre épanouissement de lui-même."

It is at this level that Florentine poses the greatest threat to him. It is not simply "the tentacles of poverty"[17] that Jean is fleeing when he abandons Florentine, as so many critics have suggested. Jean is afraid of knowing himself and of being known, and through his relationship with Florentine he runs the risk of having his bad faith revealed. In her he sees the monstrous image of himself as a worthless being, an image created by others and that he has accepted, an image that underlies his whole behaviour, an image he has spent his life fleeing.

One of the passages in the novel where these existentialist tendencies are most clear is found at the moment when Jean decides to renounce Florentine. After having made love with her, "il éprouvait le sentiment très net d'avoir *irrémédiablement engagé sa liberté*."[18] In his mind, to be "engagé" is an abandonment of self, a denial of self, a weakness. The irony of the situation is that in trying to remain free, Jean has denied his freedom and is incapable of any "engagement". He feels he is protecting his freedom, but in reality he has reduced it to a negative freedom. Sartre describes this type of situation by saying: "... ce qui va me définir comme autonomie, ce n'est pas l'invention créatrice, c'est le refus."[19] In effect Jean puts refusal of all responsibility and all "engagement" on the same footing as total freedom:

> Ce qui l'irritait encore le plus, c'était de ne pas retrouver cette pleine possession de soi qui exclut tout sens de responsabilité — Jusqu'ici, il avait su limiter sa curiosité à des tentatives prudentes, à des demi-avances *qui n'engagent pas le partage de l'être*.[20]

Azarius Lacasse shows some remarkable similarities to Jean Lévesque when looked at from the existentialist point of view. Like Jean, at times he needs an audience in front of which he can perform, such as he finds at the Deux Records.[21] When he has such an audience, even his voice changes and gains confidence, and he is able to express "ses vues audacieuses et généreuses." At home the "fanfaronnade" is gone and it becomes "difficile de reconnaître, même de loin, le discoureur des Deux Records."[22] Like Jean, Azarius needs the psychological disguise of a secondary identity to give himself confidence. He thirsts after the support and comfort of his fellows; he needs their approval in exact proportion to his doubts about himself:

> Oui, monsieur, reprit Azarius, sur le même ton exalté, soulevé par ses souvenirs et inexplicablement réchauffé par cette

> approbation dont il avait soif, et qui lui venait ce soir comme par miracle.[23]

Moreover, this passage makes it clear that Azarius too suffers from a temporal alienation, in that he tries to escape freedom, responsibility and self-determination by seeking his identity in the past. Thus, he willingly puts himself at the mercy of the "regard d'autrui" in order to win approval and is spurred on by memories of his past as a carpenter, standing on a scaffold, watching a house going up day by day.[24] Azarius waxes truly lyrical in his memories and is unable to understand why seemingly insignificant yet poetic details remain in his mind, such as the sound of his hammer, the taste of nails held in his mouth, the squeak of a new door, even the taste of snacks eaten on the job.[25] In fact, it is his existential alienation that is behind his poetical memories. As Sartre points out, this is one of the attractions memory can have. "... Le souvenir nous présente l'être que nous étions avec une plénitude d'être qui lui confère une sorte de poésie...."[26] Azarius, who is "peu habitué à reconnaître sa responsabilité dans la misère des siens, aveugle à cette misère,"[27] ignores the present to the best of his ability, and ignores his freedom and responsibility in that present. In frantically seeking his identity in the past, he seeks what Sartre calls "l'image de cette synthèse impossible de l'être et de l'existence."[28] In the end Azarius reaches a point where he actually invents a past which never existed in order to justify his inability to act in the present.

> En vérité, il n'avait jamais bâti que des petits cottages pour nouveaux mariés, mais à force de parler d'églises, de presbytères, de couvents, il avait fini par se persuader qu'il en avait construit des centaines.[29]

As Sartre points out in his essay on Baudelaire, the form that memory takes reflects one's style of life. What an individual seeks to become in the future will influence what he remembers of his past and how he remembers it.[30] In his conversations with those outside his family, Azarius' past self is the only self he can feel secure with; it is this past idealized self he seeks to become. Indeed, Sartre's description of Baudelaire applies perfectly to Azarius:

> ... il a choisi d'avancer à reculons, tourné vers le passé, accroupi au fond de la voiture qui l'emporte et fixant son regard sur la route qui fuit. Peu d'existences plus stagnantes que la sienne.[31]

Hand in hand with this tendency in Azarius to "passéisme"[32] goes its opposite, the wish to escape his real past by denying it. Despite the intense nostalgia it aroused, the end result of his conversation with Sam Latour and

the mason is a feeling of anger because he comes to see the latter, "ce petit vieux pitoyable,"[33] as the personification of his own failure.[34] This failure is linked with his inability to act, with his refusal to act because of the anguish attached to action: "Si longtemps il avait vécu dans un profond engourdisement, cessant de se tourmenter...."[35] He has caused his world of "the possible" to shrink in order to attain a "paix intérieure"[36] and has suffered a consequent lack of freedom. He is now angry with Sam Latour for mentioning a possible job because Azarius knows he is incapable of taking the steps necessary to obtain it.[37] His feeling of discomfort is increased by "le regard de Rose-Anna"[38] where he sees his own weakness reflected. Nevertheless, Azarius refuses responsibility for his past, since he sees his failure as related to a power outside himself, beyond his control: "Comment se faisait-il qu'il n'avait pas encore réussi? Sans doute parce qu'il n'avait pas eu de chance...."[39] Since good fortune is bestowed mysteriously on some and not on others for no apparent reason, Azarius can still hope to obtain all he wants in life from a change in this same magical luck and not from his own actions: "... Un jour, il en aurait, et sa grande entreprise ... le vengerait de tout le dédain, de toute la honte qu'il sentait peser sur lui."[40] Such shame, according to Sartre, can be a means of freeing us from bad faith if it leads us to assume our responsibility.[41] However, Azarius does not seek a "dépassement" of his past "en sécrétant son propre néant,"[42] but seeks to deny the past and his responsibility for it. Moreover, this refusal of his past and of self-realization based on freedom and integrity is linked, as it is with Jean Lévesque, to an attempt to escape his "être-pour-autrui." Immediately after blaming everything on his lack of magical luck, he looks at his "misérable logis" and is struck with fear:

> Il eut peur de se réveiller et de se voir tel qu'elle [Rose-Anna] l'avait jugé depuis vingt ans, tel qu'il était peut-être.
> Et, tout à coup, il souhaita l'évasion.[43]

The "regard d'autrui" threatens to reveal him as he really is, impotent before life, incapable of leading a satisfying existence. Like Jean Lévesque, he experiences a fear of knowing himself and being known and this fear arouses the desire for evasion. He feels the same desire as Jean to "fuir, de fuir constamment."[44] In such a void he could find the same "libre épanouissement"[45] as Jean, attain the same absolute solitude as Jean. Indeed, his wish is expressed in language strikingly similar to that of Jean:

> Il souhaita n'avoir *plus de femme plus d'enfants, plus de toit.* Il souhaita n'être qu'un chemineau trempé, couché dans la paille sous les étoiles et les paupières humides de rosée. Il souhaita l'aube qui le surprendrait *homme libre, sans liens, sans soucis, sans amour.*[46]

Sartre observes that this type of behaviour seeks nothing less than:

> une liberté sans limites de fait; c'est-à-dire se débarrasser de son insaisissable être-objet-pour-l'autre et abolir sa dimension d'aliénation. Cela équivaut à projeter de réaliser un monde où l'autre n'existe pas.[47]

Rose-Anna expresses the existentialist message that underlines the bad faith of Azarius:

> C'est plus sûr de compter sur nos bras, rien que sur nos deux paires de bras que de se laisser prendre par des jongleries....[48]

Azarius' decision to join the army differs from Emmanuel's in that it does not mean he is facing some emerging potentiality and fulfilling his existence. He does not enlist in a free spontaneous act which expresses a new possibility, a step toward "reinventing" his life. His enlistment is perfectly described by Rose-Anna as "des jongleries." It is linked both to his "passéisme" and to his desire to escape that past, to his desire to escape his present and flee and find a "libre épanouissement de lui-même," to his fundamental impotence, to his very inability to act and be "engagé":

> Fermant un peu les yeux, il les [les rails] vit qui se déroulaient à l'infini et le conduisaient vers sa jeunesse retrouvée. Libre, libre, incroyablement libre.
> ... Il eut un grand besoin d'aventures, de périls, de hasards, lui qui avait si misérablement échoué dans les petites choses. Et même, lui qui s'était trouvé incapable de secourir le malheur qui l'entourait, il fut saisi d'une fièvre intrépide à la pensée de combattre les grandes afflictions ravageant le monde.[49]

Emmanuel Létourneau is quite obviously presented to the reader as a contrast to Jean Lévesque.

> Pendant que Jean Lévesque, continuant sa marche errante, déplorait de ne pas avoir ce soir-là un ami à qui se vanter et s'expliquer, un jeune homme, le seul être auquel il tenait vraiment *se dirigeait* vers le restaurant de la mère Philibert.[50]

Jean is completely lacking any inner direction based on the creative use of his freedom to invent himself. On the other hand, Emmanuel will be seen to fulfil the existentialist demand that one create one's own inner-directed acts through the exercise of one's freedom. This fundamental contrast between the two characters is perfectly expressed in the sentence quoted

above by the juxtaposition of Jean's aimless wandering ("sa marche errante") and Emmanuel's self-direction ("se dirigeait").

The inner, existential difference between the two characters is reflected at all levels, even in their outward appearance. In Jean Lévesque there is a conflict between the person and the persona, between "l'être et le paraître," and this conflict ends in an existential neurosis. He tries to impose on others an image of himself that he knows is false.[51] Because he tries to adopt this second-hand identity as a means of coping with the world, he suffers a consequent lack of freedom. In Sartrian terms he becomes something viscous, sticky, fixed. The static Jean Lévesque has, in bad faith, cultivated an image of himself that is characterized by scorn for others to such an extent that this image is almost literally frozen on his lips: "Même en lisant, le jeune homme avait aux coins des lèvres cette expression railleuse...."[52] By contrast, Emmanuel's face expresses the liveliness and animation of the existentially free person. We are told his face has a natural expression of softness[53] and is "animé d'une belle expression de franchise et d'amitié."[54] In contrast to Jean's mocking expression, his smile, which he is capable of giving gratuitously,[55] flows over his face without becoming fixed or frozen in a mask.[56] Thus, there is no contradiction between the real Emmanuel and the image created by his outward behaviour, no conflict between the person and the persona, no dissociation of personality as is found in Jean. His behaviour is natural, spontaneous and not designed to impose a false image on others. Even Florentine realizes that Emmanuel "se livrait dans un regard...."[57] His fluid, dynamic, existentially free character is reflected even in his outward appearance.

Because Jean experiences his existence as a reflection of how others see him, he has a very strong desire for control, both of others and of himself. Because of this need to control his thoughts, feelings and actions, he can never be spontaneous and feel free. Before acting he must know what the result will be; hence the subject of his interest must be controllable. Since contact with others means engaging, and dealing with, the freedom of another person, he prefers withdrawal. He is afraid of life and of anything he cannot control. On the contrary, it is the spontaneity of life that attracts the existentially free Emmanuel. His freedom with regard to life, his ability to allow events to happen, are the mark of a lover of life.

> Cette journée ne répondait à rien de ce qu'avait imaginé le jeune homme. Elle lui plaisait pourtant par ce caractère d'imprévu et de suspens.[58]

Because he is such a lover of life, Emmanuel does not undergo a temporal alienation, as do Jean and Azarius. In fact, he shows an awareness that existence is a constant process of becoming in time, that people should not and cannot be isolated in time because of the possibility of change and development. From this realization comes his awareness that:

> C'est quand même difficile, de retrouver les gens, même si ça fait pas longtemps qu'on les a laissés. [59]

Because he is a hater of life, because he is afraid of life without his second-hand identity, Jean willingly transforms himself into an object so that he can hide from himself and others; he actively seeks this objectivisation. Emmanuel is distressed by the realization that people are looking only at his uniform, and struggles to overcome the process of objectivisation.[60]

Emmanuel seeks out points of contact with the past as he walks through St. Henri,[61] not because of the "passéisme" of Azarius, but because he feels a very strong solidarity with his past:

> ... pour Emmanuel, la vision qu'il avait eue, très jeune, de la misère ne cessait de l'agiter. Ainsi, il n'avait jamais complètement perdu de vue les petits gueux de cette époque, qu'il avait aimés....[62]

His memories of these "petits gueux" were one of the motivating factors in his enlisting, not because of a neurotic desire to live in the past and escape responsibility, as in the case of Azarius, but because of an existentialist desire to act to better the situation. If he realizes that "C'était lui-même, qui portait sur sa vie un regard différent,"[63] it is for the very good reason that he is not a prisoner of the past as Jean and Azarius are. Rather, he is constantly exploring himself, fashioning himself by his acts, always ready to step into a creative future.

It is in this light that Emmanuel's impassioned words to his companions can be viewed. Sartre's existentialist message is that a man will be what he makes himself be: "l'homme n'est rien d'autre que ce qu'il se fait."[64] Meaningful acts are the only way to transcend the immediate situation:

> ... Il n'y a de réalité que dans l'action ... l'homme n'est rien d'autre que son projet, il n'existe que dans la mesure où il se réalise, il n'est donc rien d'autre que l'ensemble de ses actes.[65]

This is the existentialist message that Emmanuel preaches when he tells Boisvert that he must fight "parce que c'est ta seule chance de redevenir un homme.... La richesse, c'est le travail, c'est nos bras...."[66] Emmanuel shows an existential awareness of the potentialities of the self, of the possibilities that exist, of the fact that this bringing one's inner potentialities into being can be accomplished only through the action performed by one's real self and not a second-hand identity.

An image which perfectly reflects Jean's solitude and alienation is found in the description of his room. It is with "une sorte de délectation"[67] that he imagines himself there, because, all alone in his room, he is his own master; he is master precisely because of the absence of others. Interestingly, he imagines himself as "caché dans sa petite chambre";[68] there he can take refuge from the "regard d'autrui." His room allows him to see himself as a "réalité justifié."[69] In contrast, when we first meet Emmanuel, we are made aware of a deep need in him to communicate with, and give himself to, other people:

> ... il se sentait à ce point isolé, énervé, qu'il eût volontiers engagé la conversation avec des étrangers, dans la rue.[70]

This need to communicate with others is experienced by many of his fellow soldiers, and is sharper and more marked at each leave.[71] It is, therefore, associated with the war and consequently with death, with the threat of non-being. As we have seen, Jean's reaction to existential threats is to withdraw from others. However, Emmanuel, the existentialist hero, profoundly feels the "I am" experience; he is able to face the threat of nothingness and emerge with a heightened awareness of life and its possibilities. Moreover, what he seeks in this desire for contact is the very thing that Jean is fleeing — self-knowledge:

> Que cherchait-il? Une amitié? Ou bien une part de lui-même incomplètement comprise et qui s'éclairerait au jour de l'amitié.[72]

This is not to say that Emmanuel does not feel any existential anguish, that he is not concerned with the "regard d'autrui." Emmanuel must struggle with his "timidité naturelle,"[73] an obvious reaction to the gaze of others. At the Quinze-Cents with Jean and Florentine he is very conscious of his reflection in the mirror and momentarily succumbs to the same role-playing behaviour as Jean and Florentine.[74] At home, looking in his own mirror, he studies his face and features, wondering if Florentine will find him attractive.[75] When talking to Florentine at his home, he also seeks "dans le regard qu'elle levait sur lui une approbation."[76] However, there is a major difference in this respect between Jean, Florentine and Azarius on the one hand, and Emmanuel on the other. All four experience anxiety because of the freedom involved, their own freedom and that of the other person. Jean reacts either by seeking to dominate or by fleeing. Emmanuel assumes his freedom, faces the possibility of destroying a present security in order to step into a new, creative future. Existentially freedom consists not in the absence of influences but in the direction we give to those influences. Thus, in spite of the threat contained in her look, Emmanuel does not seek to

dominate Florentine but rather thinks to himself: "j'aimerais lui donner une petite joie"[77] and is able to continue despite his natural shyness.

Jean's need for a secondary identity explains his behaviour toward Florentine. To lower another person is to raise oneself; to wound another is to find proof of one's power. This is what Jean needs above all:

> Il voulut la Florentine diminuer alors dans son esprit, essaya de se rappeler ses mots vulgaires, les gestes maladroits.[78]

When he is actually with her in the restaurant he is embarrassed by what he feels is her vulgarity; it threatens his secondary identity since others may see him as vulgar also.[79] Emmanuel's attitude to Florentine's behaviour is remarkable for the contrast it presents. Because he is free from neurotic anxiety and doubts about himself, because he can let go of self-centred interest and attention and thereby achieve an authentic mode of existence,[80] he is able to see Florentine's "petites maladresses"[81] as something sympathetic, moving, even lovable.[82] Not only does he not seek to dominate her or to capture her freedom, he is aware of the futility of attempting to do so. He is conscious of the fact that his objectivisation of her in his daydreams does not correspond to reality:

> La Florentine de ses songes l'aimait, elle était comme lui, tantôt follement gaie, tantôt triste sans raison; elle le suivait par tous les détours de la pensée. Mais la Florentine vivante?[83]

One of the images in the novel which has attracted most comment is the mountain which dominates Montreal. The author uses this image to communicate a multiplicity of ideas, but it can be very instructive to interpret it in an existentialist way as an image of the fixed, solid, static thing that certain characters, in bad faith, aspire to become. When Florentine looks at the mountain, she sees Florentine — object in all its perfection, the pleasing piece of merchandise that everyone will envy, the image she would like to see reflected in others' eyes:

> ... Elle regardait la montagne, mais ce qu'elle y retrouvait c'était la grande glace du restaurant et son propre visage avec des lèvres douces, des cheveux mousseaux et légers comme s'ils eussent été réfléchis dans une nappe d'eau sombre.[84]

The same image communicates the fact that Jean, like Florentine, aspires to a fixed solid existence, to those "stable states of realization in which [he] might stay satisfied with [his] mobility intact";[85] in Sartrian terms, to a union of the "pour-soi" with the "en-soi":

> ... Dans une large échancrure du faubourg, apparaît la ville de Westmount échelonnée jusqu'au faîte de la montagne dans son *rigide confort* anglais. Il se trouve ainsi que c'est aux voyages infinis de l'âme qu'elle invite.[86]

Emmanuel's reaction to this symbol of bad faith is entirely different. In the first place, he actually makes the effort to climb the mountain, a point to which we shall return. Moreover, Emmanuel is repelled, not attracted by what he finds when he reaches Westmount. The entire passage abounds in descriptions of hard, fixed, static objects, symbols of the bad faith of those who live there:

> L'éclat de la pierre riche et polie tombait sur lui, dur, indéchiffrable, avec des reflets d'acier.
> La pierre, les grilles de fer forgé, hautaines et froides, les portes de vieux chêne, les lourds heurtoirs de cuivre, le fer, l'acier, le bois, la pierre, le cuivre, l'argent semblaient s'animer peu à peu et semblaient dire....
> "Mais ta vie, c'est ce qu'il y a de meilleur marché sur terre. Nous autres, la pierre, le fer, l'acier, l'or, l'argent, nous sommes ce qui se paye cher et ce qui dure."[87]

In existentialist terms, the people of Westmount have surrounded themselves with such objects as a protection against the realization of the gratuitousness of their existence. As Sartre says, if this type of person is surrounded by such objects, he can feel reassured: "ils lui renvoient le reflet de ce qu'il souhaite être: une réalité justifiée."[88] In fact, the whole confrontation scene between Emmanuel and the inhabitants of Westmount is described in terms which strongly recall Roquentin's visit to the museum at Bouville, when he confronts the false values of the "salauds" who see themselves as necessary beings.[89] Ingrid Joubert's comment on this scene from *La nausée* could apply equally well to Emmanuel's visit to Westmount:

> "L'esprit de sérieux," qui s'affiche dans ces "cas" sociaux ... veut considérer les valeurs comme des essences, des substances abstraites qui peuvent s'incarner dans les objets concrets et dans les hommes.
> ... Les salauds sont donc ceux qui se croient justifiés indispensables à quelqu'un ou à quelque chose, alors que l'angoisse vécue par Roquentin appelle à poser avec plus d'exigence la question de sa justification.[90]

It is indeed the question of his justification that Emmanuel is posing most intensely on top of the mountain. He realizes that, were it not for the

war, he may never have been freed from the false values of society; he may have never had to confront the question of the meaning of his life.[91] Now he must find an answer to "l'éternelle énigme humaine." Moreover, it is at this level that Emmanuel's climb up the mountain is reminiscent in many ways of Camus' *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*. As he makes his way up the hill he is described as feeling "écrasé sous le poids de l'inconcevable erreur humaine."[92] He is presented as a representative figure and his "rock" is mankind's anguish. His rôle as a Sisyphus figure is emphasized again when he confronts the houses of the rich:

> Toute l'inquiétude, toute l'angoisse du bas quartier semblaient s'être collées à lui au départ, et plus il était monté haut, plus elles s'étaient retenues, tenaces à son corps.[93]

As he is about to leave for war, he discovers that his "rock" has followed him back down the mountain and that he must once more struggle with it; the anguish he had felt on the mountain again takes hold of him.[94] As Gagné points out,[95] the idea that war might serve the cause of justice ends by vanishing and leaving only the memory of a dream of happiness to mankind. Emmanuel, like Sisyphus, demonstrate what Gagné calls "la volonté d'une absurde résistance."[96] Emmanuel's action in departing for war conveys the Camusian idea that, even when confronted by a hopeless situation, man can still give meaning to his life, can change a tragedy into a personal triumph; what matters is to bear witness to the greatness of man. He shows, as Camus says, that "la lutte elle-même vers les sommets suffit à remplir un coeur d'homme."[97]

His departure also recalls the "Lettres à un ami allemand" written by Camus during the war. In these letters Camus speaks of the social implications of his brand of existentialism. He talks of the difficulty of making war when one knows the futility of hate and violence. He describes someone who consents to fight while hating war, who accepts the risk of losing everything while keeping his taste for happiness, who is willing to go to possible destruction for the sake of a superior civilization.[98] The last letter concludes with a statement regarding the importance of protest and revolt:

> L'homme devait affirmer la justice pour lutter contre l'injustice éternelle, créer du bonheur pour protester contre l'univers du malheur.
> ... Et moi, refusant d'admettre ce désespoir et ce monde torturé, je voulais seulement que les hommes retrouvent leur solidarité pour entrer en lutte contre leur destin révoltant.[99]

Emmanuel too realizes the tremendous paradox involved in justifying a decision to go to war and expresses his thoughts in terms very similar to those of Camus:

> ... pour faire la guerre, il fallait être rempli d'un amour, d'une passion véhémente, il fallait être exalté par une ivresse, sans quoi elle restait inhumaine et absurde ... un idéal de justice, de beauté, de fraternité.[100]

I would like to conclude my paper with a quotation from the English poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins:

> Each mortal thing does one thing and the same;
> Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
> Selves — goes itself; myself it speaks and spells.[101]

The English poet is using the word "selves" here as a verb. When Florentine, Jean and Azarius "selve", the self that is affirmed is a secondary, shrivelled self in which many of its possibilities are denied the chance to be actualized. It is a fixed, limited, weak and unrealistic self that they "speak and spell." When Emmanuel "selves", he shows an ability to confront anxiety, to face it without repression, to allow emerging possibilities open to it. It is a self that truly "selves" because it is a self which has come to know the "I am" experience. That is why Emmanuel is able to experience the happiness that accompanies what Paul Tillich calls "the self-affirmation of our essential being in spite of the inhibitions coming from the accidental elements in us."[102] The norm, the value system of the novel is an existentialist one — "identité d'occasion" leads only to "bonheur d'occasion", whereas, to quote Paul Tillich again, "joy is the emotional expression of the courageous Yes to one's own true being."[103]

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Notes

1. Dennis Drummond, "Identité d'occasion dans *Bonheur d'occasion*," in *Solitude Rompue*, textes réunis par C. Cloutier-Wojciechowska et Réjean Robidoux en hommage à David M. Hayne (Ottawa: Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1976) 85-102.
2. The material in the following four pages appeared in French in a different form in the article cited in note 1.
3. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Etre et le néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943) 431.
4. Cf. R. May, E. Angel and H.F. Ellenburger, eds, *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1958) 44.

5. Cf. Sartre, *L'Etre et le néant*, 349.
6. Gabrielle Roy, *Bonheur d'occasion* (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1970) 18.
7. Ibid., 19.
8. Cf. ibid., 22: "Et dans le coeur de Florentine la rage s'adoucissait déjà, mêlée à l'agréable sensation d'être enviée. Jamais dans sa vie elle n'avait apprécié la possession de pauvres objets, d'amitiés passagères ou même de souvenirs épars qu'à travers d'autres yeux que les siens."
9. Ibid., 120. The emphasis is my own.
10. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Le Mur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1939) 243.
11. Sartre, *L'Etre et le néant*, 158.
12. Cf. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 30, 36.
13. Cf. Erich Fromm, *Escape From Freedom* (New York: Avon, 1965) 184.
14. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 25.
15. Ibid., 96.
16. Ibid., 188.
17. Phyllis Grosskurth, *Gabrielle Roy* (Toronto: Forum House, 1969) 12.
18. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 184. The emphasis is my own.
19. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Situations I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947) 326.
20. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 184. The emphasis is my own.
21. Cf. ibid., 38-43 and 129-36.
22. Ibid., 80.
23. Ibid., 135.
24. Ibid., 135.
25. Ibid., 140.
26. *L'Etre et le néant*, 163.
27. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 249.
28. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Baudelaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947) 196.
29. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 141.
30. Cf. *Baudelaire*, 196.
31. *Baudelaire*, 188.
32. Ibid., 195.
33. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 136.
34. Ibid., 137.
35. Loc. cit.
36. Loc. cit.
37. Loc. cit.
38. Ibid., 138.
39. Ibid., 142.
40. Ibid.
41. Cf. *L'Etre et le néant*, 292: "Le chemin de l'intériorité passe par l'autre."
42. Ibid., 65.
43. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 142.
44. Ibid., 29.
45. Cf. note 15.
46. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 143. The emphasis my own. Cf. also note 14.
47. *L'Etre et le néant*, 481.
48. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 334.
49. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 334-5.
50. Ibid., 44. The emphasis is my own. Cf. also ibid., 57.
51. Cf. Drummond, "Identité d'occasion," *Solitude Rompue*, 94.
52. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 14.
53. Cf. ibid., 47.
54. Ibid., 45.
55. Cf. ibid., 298.
56. Cf. ibid., 49.
57. Ibid., 343.

58. Ibid., 289.
59. Ibid., 45.
60. Cf. ibid., 46.
61. Cf. ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid., 47.
64. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* (Paris: Nagel, 1960) 22.
65. Ibid., 55.
66. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 53-5.
67. Ibid., 24.
68. Ibid.
69. Cf. Drummond, "Identité d'occasion," 98.
70. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 57.
71. Loc. cit.
72. Loc. cit.
73. Ibid., 94.
74. Cf. ibid., 96.
75. Cf. ibid., 255.
76. Ibid., 122.
77. Ibid., 97.
78. Ibid., 34.
79. Cf. ibid., 72.
80. Cf. Viktor E. Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism: Selected Papers on Logotherapy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) 52-3.
81. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 100.
82. Cf. idid., 113.
83. Ibid., 256.
84. Ibid., 73-4.
85. John D. Wild, "Existenialism as a Philosophy," *Sartre: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Edith Kern, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962) 147.
86. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 33. The emphasis is my own. Cf. also, Drummond, "Identité d'occasion," 92-3 and 95.
87. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 286.
88. *Beaudelaire*, 122.
89. Cf. Jean-Paul Sartre, *La nausée* (Paris: Folio, 1982) 119-35.
90. Ingrid Joubert, *Aliénation et liberté dans Les Chemins de la liberté* (Paris: Didier, 1973) 17.
91. Cf. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 287.
92. Ibid., 285.
93. Ibid., 286.
94. Cf. ibid., 338.
95. Cf. Marc Gagné, *Visages de Gabrielle Roy* (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1973) 52.
96. Ibid., 53.
97. Albert Camus, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942) 168.
98. Albert Camus, "Lettres à un ami allemand," in *Selected Political Writings* (London: Methuen, 1981) 49.
99. Ibid., 65.
100. *Bonheur d'occasion*, 281.
101. *Poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. by Robert Bridges, (London: O.U.P., 1948) 95.
102. Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 1952) 14.
103. Ibid.

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